



Editor:

Dr Saeed Shehabi

A bi-monthly newsletter

Published by the

45 Crawford Place,
London W1H 4LP

Tel: 020 7724 3033

Email:

abrarhouse

@hotmail.com

Website

www.abraronline.net

Charity no. 293802

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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Abrar

Vol 16, No 11 (395)

1st-15th December 2020

Targeting Islamic movements is dangerous approach

It has always been assumed that modern liberal political practices have avoided the need for generalization, stereotyping or prejudice when dealing with common crimes committed by individuals. Islam as well as other religions do not permit their followers to attack others, kill or aggrieve them in any way. God's religions are generally against violence, blood-letting or savagery. They aspire to establish the Kingdom of God on earth and urge their followers to be God's image on this planet. The belief that God Almighty is just dictates that He will not ask people to commit large scale crimes. Yet many do. Many also attribute their crimes to their religions and claim that their criminality is in response to divine commands. This unfounded claims do not have formidable argument but are uttered to justify the evil intentions of their perpetrators. On the positive side, modern judiciary does not take the claims of criminals and terrorist seriously. Those criminals are put on trial and sentenced if convicted. But their allegations of being motivated by their religions are not taken seriously by the law-enforcement agencies. The courts do not issue summons or verdicts against those religions. They deeply believe that the crime is personal; and that only those directly implicated in the criminal acts are liable for prosecution.

Yet some Western political leaders have, in recent times, diverged from this position. They have often waged attacks on religions especially Islam and appeared to believe the claims of the terrorists who proclaim Islam as the motivation for their criminal behaviour. Thus when the French President, Emmanuel Macron issued his infamous statements last month arguing that Islam was in crisis and relating the terrorists to the religion, a shockwave emerged in the Muslim world. Protests and demonstrations were held in many countries against his statements. There were calls to boycott French goods. His ill-conceived comments exposed lack of real understanding of the situation. He should have read more about the religion and drew a line between it and those who commit crimes in its name.

But despite the outrage among the Muslims, Mr Macron was not repentant. He still considers what he calls "Political Islam" as a problematic phenomenon that must be confronted. Subsequently, he went further and asked Muslim leaders to agree a "charter of republican values" as part of a broad clampdown on radical Islam. He gave the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) 15 days to work with the interior ministry. The CFCM has agreed to create a National Council of Imams, which will reportedly issue imams with official accreditation which could be withdrawn. This is viewed as a serious contradiction of the French principles of freedom and human rights. It show a lack of real comprehension on how to confront local and international challenges on the basis or real understanding, not stereotyping or prejudice. But what made the situation worse is the threats by some Western leaders, including the French and Austrian to target what they called "political Islam". This refers to the moderate movements that seek to place religion in the public domain and draw from it principles to regulate people's lives. They point to the Muslim Brotherhood as the main target, but it is expected that if that policy is adopted, the targeting will not stop at that. It is clear that Middle Eastern politics are infringing on the French attitude towards Islam and the region. It would have been more appropriate if those leaders had addressed the grievances in the Arab and Muslim worlds and directed their policies to support democratic transformation in the region and work to curtail Israeli excesses in Palestine. Justice and freedom are necessary to contain an



alarming situation that produces extremists and terrorists. Taming it needs worldwide efforts to establish modern statehoods based on self-determination for the people and establishing their rights, freedom and political participation in public life. If peaceful and moral Muslim activists are targeted by Western powers, the situation will become worse not just regionally but also internationally. This must be avoided at all cost to enable the establishment a peaceful and tranquil world.

Post-Trump America

The US election saga was the subject of debate of a seminar by The Open Discussion and The Gulf Cultural Club held on Tuesday 17th November. It was titled "Post-Trump America, the long way to political and moral recovery". Three speakers addressed the seminar. The first was

Sarah Leah Whitson (Human rights activist). She said that 70 millions voted for Trump, this shows how divided US is today. There are good news and bad news about Biden election. There is strong consensus among new comers that the romance between trumpism, MBS and MBZ must be curbed. The outrage at the murder of Khashoggi played for Biden. He made promises to end arms sales to Saudi and re-assess the links with them. He also said he wanted to end US role in Yemen. Biden presidency will reduce the chances of war with Iran. Trump was persuaded not to launch missile attack on Iran. Biden said he would work for a new agreement with Iran, and stronger links with EU. He will not help a war between Israel or UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Obama was critical of dictators, did not go to war with Iran but he was involved in Yemen.

These are bad news. He has no view on the Middle East.. He views it in light of US interests only. He advocated Iraq's partition. He will face pressure from Israel not to work against Saudi Arabia. Biden may put pressure on Saudis to stop the war on Yemen, but he won't pressure UAE to leave Socotra or end its control of South Yemen.

There will be no move back from on annexation of the Golan Heights or Jerusalem as capital. He may pressure on Egypt to release detainees. There is the National Intelligence Report which contains evidence as to why bin Salman ordered the murder of Kashogi. The US Congress demanded that that report be released and made public. The Trump administration refused to do that for

many months and finally, they released only a classified version to congress and have refused to declassify it. There is now a law suit which our organization is a part of against the Department of National Intelligence to force them to release that report in the public interest.

Dr Laith Kubba (former Iraqi official) Trump left his marks on history and us, in a negative way. There was a moment in time when the US was the superpower of the world especially after the Soviet Union. Clinton years were a good ride, better economy and placed US in unique position, its agenda spread in world. After 9/11 Bush had bad years. He paved the way for Obama, bringing healthcare, Biden was his VP. I happened to testify twice at the Senate with Biden chairing the briefing. He is a politician and pragmatist. He knows not only domestic politics but internationally. His views on Iraq are based on ill-advice.

He is open to listening. He is not advocate of Iraq division. Most presidents come from within establishment, Biden is one of them. He will not go against it. Trump did.

Biden's team is shaping up. He has not secured majority of Senate. This means his hands will be tied up. Lobbies of Israel, Saudi, Kurdish, Armenian have access to his team. Trump weakened US. America is pulling out of its global role.

Trump is working against Republican party. He created prejudice. The outcome is that US emerged weaker. Where is Biden taking us from here? He will work with international bodies, UN, EU and NATO. He will avoid the policy of carrot and stick of trump and engage more in politics. Within the Middle East. Trump sub-contracted the Middle East work to Israel which has expanded role. He pushed Gulf countries and Sudan to sign peace with Israel.

On the bigger picture, he made China No 1 rival. China is rivalling US on economy and beyond. This benefited Russia. Biden may change this

On the Middle East Trump passed many cards to Biden. He will negotiate with

Iran and demand more concessions. Israelis have strong position because of the cards given by Trump

Roshan Mohammad Salih (Journalist) presented a Muslim perspective. He said that 70 percent voted for Trump. Trump avoided major wars. He opted to smaller scale battles. His most consequential action is with Iran and Israel, maximum pressure strategy on Iran. He was most pro-Israel president. He attracted countries to sign peace deal with Israel. We may say that trump's domestic policy is more important.

He got vast section of American population who are die hard supporters.

There is anger and resentment in Muslim world against USA. We have wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We also have economic sanctions.

Those who liked Biden think that he is a more stable person. Trump is unpredictable.

Biden believes nuclear deal is best deal and he may negotiate with Iran on it.

I have some Iranian friends. But they are also split on who they want to win.

On Palestine he will change rhetoric but not substance. He will restore ties with PLO

It will not make a difference.

When international politicians talk of two state solution they know it won't happen.

This is example of politicians taking their audience for fools. Biden will not approve West Bank annexation and he is against settlements. US has been key in Gulf security. He committed to re-assess US-Saudi relations and the war on Yemen. He will push Saudi and GCC to end blockade on Qatar. Trump turned blind eye to Erdogan activities. It is interesting to see the Biden-Erdogan saga unfold Saudi and other nations want US to stay. There is more predictability with Biden. George Bush junior said he was not interested in major wars, but then 9/11 happened and changed that

* The Abrar weekly meeting on Thursday 19th November was addressed by Sayed Ahmad al-Ashkouri from Najaf, Iraq. He gave historical and ideological analysis of the revolts that followed the martyrdom of Imam Hussain in 680 AD. He stressed the need to reject oppression and stand up to challenge oppressors. He talked about the successive revolts including those led by Al Mukhtar Al Thaqafi, Suleiman ibn Surad Aal-Khoza'ei and Zayd ibn Ali. He highlighted the stands of the Imams in those revolts.



UN warns of imminent "worst famine" in Yemen



Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres has warned of world's "worst famine" in the past decades challenging the war-torn people in Yemen expressing concern over the US threats to blacklist Houthi Ansarullah movement assisting Yemeni army in fight against Saudi-led coalition.

Guterres made the remarks on Friday, as aid workers have already raised fears that if Washington carries out its threat in designating the Houthis a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), it will bar life-saving aid from reaching the impoverished country.

"In this very fragile situation in relation to famine and in this hopeful moment in relation to conversations, we believe that any other unilateral initiative will probably not be positive. I don't think we should rock the boat at the present moment," the UN chief said during a press conference when asked about US plans regarding Yemen.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies, with arms support from the US and several Western countries, launched a brutal war on Yemen in March 2015 in an attempt to restore the Riyadh-friendly regime of the resigned president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, and crush the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement that has taken control of state matters.

The ongoing war has failed to achieve its goals, but killed tens of thousands of innocent Yemenis and destroyed the impoverished country's infrastructure.

The UN says more than 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger. The world body also refers to the situation in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Netanyahu, MBS and Pompeo met in Saudi Arabia

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met the Saudi crown prince in Saudi Arabia, an Israeli cabinet minister said on 23rd November, the first publicly confirmed trip to the kingdom by an Israeli leader amid a diplomatic flurry prompted by regional fears of Iran.

Earlier, Israel's Army Radio and Kan Radio both reported that Netanyahu had secretly flown on 23rd November to the Saudi Red Sea town of Neom for talks

with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, has traditionally championed the Palestinian cause and shunned all official contacts with Israel. News of the meeting came a day after Netanyahu, in an apparent message to U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, said in a speech there should be no return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal abandoned by President Donald Trump.

Education Minister Yoav Gallant, a member of Netanyahu's security cabinet and Likud party, confirmed the Saudi meeting had taken place, describing it as an "amazing achievement".

"The very fact the meeting happened, and was outed publicly, even if half-officially right now, is a matter of great importance," Gallant told Army Radio.



Iran will seek international justice over medical sanctions

A senior official at Iran's Ministry of Health and Medical Education said on Monday that Iran will lodge a complaint against US with the International Court of Justice over medical sanctions.

The medical sanctions have caused losses to people's health, Taher Mouhebbati told IRNA at a virtual press conference.

Documents ave been given to vice-president for legal affairs, and the Government will lodge the complaint with international justice against the US over blocking Iran from access to life support system and medical supplies amid corona pandemic, Mouhebbati said.

He said that the Vice-president for legal affairs will take legal action with the International Court of Justice against the US medical sanctions.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani termed the US move to block Iranian access to emergency and medical supplies as "medical terrorism".

Iranian officials say the US blocked Iranian access to life support system and medical supplies whereas it claims advocacy of human rights.

Demise of a scholar

Sayyid Mohammad Hussein al-Husseini al-Jalali, who was a great scholar and the founder and director of the Open School in Chicago has passed away.



Sayyid Mohammad Hussein came from a learned, respected, and well-known family. He was the son of the late great scholar Sayyid Mohsen al-Jalali, and the brother of Sayyid

Mohammad Taqi al-Jalali and Sayyid Muhammad Ridha al-Jalali, the martyr and great researcher, respectively. All of them gained their knowledge from the Islamic Seminary in the Holy city of Najaf under great scholars and jurists, and graduated with excellence as prominent scholars, researchers, and authors.

The late Sayyid Mohammad Hussein immigrated to some of the gulf countries where he led congregational prayers and served the community of believers as an official representative for the late Ayatullah al-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei (may Allah bless his soul) in the 1970's. Thereafter, he immigrated to the Holy city of Qom and later to the United States in the early 1980s. He arrived in Chicago and remained there until the day he departed from this world on 21st November.

Imminent catastrophe in Gaza amid COVID-19 pandemic

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has warned of the worsening coronavirus infection and exhausted medical system in the besieged Gaza Strip expressing concern over imminent catastrophe there.

Basem Naim, a member of the Hamas International Relations Office, said in a statement on Monday that the high rate of infections can overwhelm the fragile health system.

Gaza should be expecting the worst if the epidemiological situation of the coronavirus continues with the current casualty rates, he said, pointing to the exhausted health system, which has been limping as a result of 14 years of Israel's blockade.

The Hamas official accused Israel of hampering efforts to contain the coronavirus in Gaza, saying the siege has caused shortages of essential drugs and basic necessities.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Naim said the Gaza Health Ministry needs more than one medical oxygen generation plant and over 50 ventilators to confront the virus.



Islamic unity center condemns Saudi anti-Brotherhood statement

Iran's World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought has issued a statement on Tuesday to condemn the recent message by Saudi scholars against Muslim Brotherhood.

World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought in its message criticized the ignorance of Saudi Arabia for Islamic unity and blacklisting Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist, reported Taqrib News Agency (TNA).

Iranian major Islamic unity center in its message wrote, "In the wake of the blessed Islamic Unity Week and following the world Muslim scholars urge for boosting Islamic solidarity in face of calamities and hostilities, scholars affiliated with Al-Saud have tuned for divi-

sion and animosity in introducing followers of Muslim Brotherhood as terrorists and excommunicating them from Islam."

World forum in another part of its message warned against deliberate pursuit of division by "followers of arrogant powers" being more painful than ignorance and deviation of others.

"Official statement by some scholars affiliated with Al-Saud against Muslim Brotherhood is clear instance of division and Takfir (excommunication)" read another part of the message by World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought warning of the critical era when world arrogant powers and Zionists are blindly and infinitely defending the United States policies in the region.

Top Islamic unity center slammed Saudi scholars for weakening the solidarity of Muslim liberals who have stood against expansionist policies of the Zionists and demanded, "Would it not be better that you targeted enemies of Islam and humanity? Would it not be netter to defend your oppressed Palestinian brothers and sisters or issue such a major statement to alleviate their sufferings? Or even stopped paving the grounds for normalization of ties with Israeli regime?"

World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought condemned "any effort to divide Islamic nation and strengthen the Zionist regime of Israel" stressing that any endeavor to weaken solidarity of Muslims is a treachery to objectives of Qur'an and guidelines of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

It also stressed intellectual support for any movement boosting solidarity among Muslims and expressed hope that the entire Muslim nation will take steps in line with confrontation with enemies of Islam.

Sweden court lifts Islamic Hijab ban at Malmo schools

A court in Sweden has reportedly reversed a ruling which bans wearing Islamic hijab by Muslim students in schools in a southern Swedish town. Malmo Administrative Court of Appeals reversed a previous decision which banned wearing Islamic hijab at schools in the town.

A statement by the ombudsperson said that the appeal had been made for violating the Swedish constitution.

The Skurup town council had banned the headscarf for students under the age of 13 last year. However, one of the school principals in the area had said that he does not recognize the decision and would not implement it in his school.

European countries have come under fire for their obsession with banning the Islamic headscarf and face veil.

In Sweden, proposals on the issue have been endorsed by MPs from the Centre Party, the Liberals, the Moderates and the Swedish Democrats since 2009.

The annual European Islamophobia Report shows that political and public discourses of Nordic countries continually feature debates on the role of the face veil and the headscarf in public spaces.

However, both in Finland as well as in Sweden, legislative proposals for face veil bans have failed so far.



First witnesses testify in Nigeria Shia leader's trial

Witnesses have begun testifying in the trial of the leader of a banned Shia Muslim group, Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky, at a High Court in the northern city of Kaduna.

Sheikh Zakzaky, leader of Nigeria's main Shia group, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, and his wife Zinah were arrested in December 2015, when his followers clashed with the army in the city of Zaria. They are accused of inciting violence, murder and disturbing public peace among other charges.

They deny the charges brought against them by the Kaduna state government.

Two military officers were the first to testify on 18 November. But details of their testimony at the closed-door court sitting have yet to emerge.

They were cross-examined by the defendants' lawyers.

One of Sheikh Zakzaky's lawyers, Sadau

Garba, told the BBC that the ailing cleric and his wife, who were being held in prison, were not brought to the court, as earlier agreed by all parties. The sitting continues tomorrow with more witnesses expected to testify.

Rights groups had said that more than 300 followers of Sheikh Zakzaky were killed during the 2015 clashes and a subsequent military crackdown, resulting in the cleric being badly wounded in the eye. At the time, the military alleged that members of the banned group, who were holding a religious procession, attempted to assassinate Nigeria's army chief, Lt Gen Tukur Buratai, when they blocked a highway on which his convoy was travelling.

Earlier this year, another High Court acquitted more than 100 of Sheikh Zakzaky's followers over the incident, resulting in their release.



The Sun

Evil reigned,
Ugliness prevailed,
Stone hearts embraced
Newborn babes,
Before burying them alive
In freshly dug graves
An era black and scarlet,
Dripping with blood and hatred,
Power steeped in abuse,
Tribalism and festering feud
And yet,
From these dark depths
Rose an unparalleled sun,
Eclipsing the darkest horizon.
He was beauty and virtue manifest,
The light of all existence,
Muhammad
Touched by the depth of compassion in
his soul,
Stone hearts melted, dry eyes flowed
So blessed was his smile, pure his life,
true his word,
Luminosity shone from the hearts he
stirred
In lives once bestial and mindless
He nurtured humanity and purpose
Souls arrogant, abusive and faithless
Grew humble, godly and selfless
Yet Muhammad,
The most luminous of souls,
Lived so long ago
So with his death,
Did the sun that reflects,
The light of divinity,
Set? Or
Is his light now infused
In hearts that refuse
To turn away
From the sun's eternal ray?
Muhammad's light is diffusive,
Unstrained by time and place,
It is not selfishly contained -
It seeks out the darkness
And floods it with radiance
And so,
If Muhammad's light truly shines within
me,
I not only refine my own spirit,
I fight the darkness in my family,
Extinguish it within my community,
I challenge it wherever it may be
And if my heart is covered in sins,
Filled with selfish whims,
If it's dirty and opaque,
I first clear the filth and haze,
Only then, can I assimilate,
Pure light
O my Beloved Muhammad!
O Light of my life!
With all my love and all my might,
I will strive
To be your true reflection,
Your flame and beacon,
I will reveal and mirror your beauty
For all humanity!

By Fatema Valji @fatemavaljipoetry



Fragments from world's oldest Qur'an sold by Christie's

Written just decades after the birth of Islam, a rare fragment from a seventh-century Qur'an recently fetched almost 1 million pounds.

A preserved fragment like this is a rare find, and it is believed to be from the same Qur'an as others dated to around 650-750 CE and held in Paris and Leiden. Auction house Christie's offered it on sale in late October 2020 and it fetched close to £1 million, a price that far exceeded its estimated price of between £250,000 and £350,000.

Christie's sales of arts from the Islamic and Indian worlds attract the attention of collectors and there is usually a huge demand for arts, jewellery, and manuscripts. Among these items at the recent sale was the well-preserved historical folio from a 7th century Qur'an and its verses written in Hijazi script.

According to Frances Keyworth, a cataloguer in Christie's Islamic Art Departments, this is an important early Qur'an folio. This particular fragment appears to have been contained within one of the oldest Qur'ans and offers a fine sample of one of the earliest forms of Arabic calligraphy. Written in Hijazi style, the script is composed of the vertical strokes commonly used during the seventh century.

The history of the Qur'an dates to 610 CE. The revelations from God were made to the Prophet Muhammad in stages, believed to have continued until he died around 632 CE. For several years after the Prophet's death, the revelations made to him continued to be passed down orally in a unified version.

Substantial in size, the folio measures 34.5 cm by 31 cm and is one of only a handful of fragments to have survived from the copies of the Qur'an made in the first decades after the founding of Islam.

The Hijazi script used on the folio was common until the eighth century CE, but it was gradually replaced by the Kufic script. According to Christie's Frances Keyworth, the script could have been created by a scribe born in Muhammed's time.

The text on the folio has remained remarkably unscathed and displays 18 out of 19 lines of the script. These are verses 82-90 from Chapter 19 of the Qur'an, and they speak of God's love for people who act righteously.

The folio also has one of the earliest forms of Arabic manuscript illumination still in existence. It runs along the bottom of the folio in a geometric pattern and was used to indicate chapter breaks.

The majority of the 38 known fragments from the earliest Qur'an manuscripts in existence today are in museums. Only two fragments match the format, style, and size of the Hijazi folio recently sold. Some of the smaller fragments are in London's British Library, the Vatican in Rome, and Istanbul's Topkapi Palace Museum.

According to Keyworth, the two larger fragments almost certainly come from the same manuscript as the one recently sold, and almost certainly written by the same hand. They form part of the collections at Netherland's Leiden University (Or. 14.454b-c) and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (Arabe 331).

Two Muslim women to contest for BJP

Party in Malappuram upbeat over Muslim women entering the fray

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has finally found two Muslim women to contest the elections in Malappuram, the only Muslim-majority district in the State.

T.P. Sulfath from Wandoor and Ayisha Hussain from Chemmad have become the first Muslim woman duo in Malappuram to contest an election under the BJP's banner.

Ms. Sulfath filed her nomination for the Wandoor grama panchayat from Ward 6 (Shanti-Koottambara) on Wednesday. Ms. Ayisha will file her nomination on Thursday for the Ponnundam grama panchayat from Ward 9.

The BJP in Malappuram has been upbeat over finding Muslim women to contest the local body elections. Although Ms. Sulfath was offered a district panchayat division, she chose her own grama panchayat as she has been keen on beginning from the grassroots.

Fan of Modi

An avid fan of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ms. Sulfath said the progressive policies followed by the BJP had attracted her to that party. "Who else can implement such progressive measures as banning



triple talaq and raising marriageable age for women? There is none in current Indian politics to match Modiji not only in charisma but in efficiency and determination as well," she told The Hindu.

A mother of two children, Ms. Sulfath prefers to be self-reliant by engaging in a variety of business.

Married at 15, Ms. Sulfath said her life had taught her the bitter lessons of entering into nuptials as a child. Her progressive thoughts have won her many new friends and fans. Youngsters have started approaching her for selfies.

Ms. Sulfath is not certain about staging an upset in a ward where the BJP has a weak base.

"But my candidature sends home the message that the BJP is a safe party. We want a third alternative to end the adjustment politics being played by the United Democratic Front and the Left Democratic Front," she said.

Ms. Ayisha too is a first timer in the fray. Mother of a 10-year-old girl, Ms. Ayisha too has been a fan of Vajpayee and Modi. Her husband Hussain Varik-

kottil, who is a district committee member of the Minority Morcha, is also contesting to the Malappuram district panchayat from the Edarikode division under the BJP banner.

'Strangest looks'



Maria Muhammad works as a ride-sharing driver and a security guard in Victoria. Every day she faces a two-fold challenge: her community thinks she is doing a man's job while she claims that her head-scarf makes her prone to racism.

At 3 am in Melbourne, Maria is waiting for her next ride in a taxi rank, commonly shared by taxi drivers and ride-sharing drivers. But her thoughts get constantly distracted by the other drivers passing by or near her car.

"I get the strangest looks as if I am an alien," Maria tells SBS Urdu. "The jobs that come under the 'tradie' domain are normally not associated women especially those coming from migrant communities such as Pakistan."

"When another driver looks at me he has a big question mark in his eyes, indicating what is this scarf-clad woman is doing at night?"

"Women help their children at home and do house chores. Those who opt for work do so in white-collar jobs. But to work as a ride-sharing car driver or even a security, it is simply unthinkable," she says.

Maria says most of the rides are pleasant with no concern from any passenger. "Almost everyone I have picked up and dropped, the customers have been very polite. There is, though, an odd customer who asks about my [headscarf] appearance and questions that are sometimes racist. But when I talk to them, tell them why I am doing what I am doing, it turns out well."

In 2015, Maria started as an Uber driver during weekends working part-time on various days, and two years later she worked as a full-time driver.

She says that in the end, it won't matter about her working as a driver because she has to work herself to make a living. "I am not bothered if someone thinks or talks something about me. Let them think what they want. I have a life to live."

During the pandemic and severe lockdown in Victoria, Maria worked at a COVID-19 testing centre as a security guard. But with the lockdown now eased she is looking forward to being back in her driving seat, with no concerns about other drivers' behaviours.

"I am not bothered, I am glad I will be back to my normal work," Maria said.

First Muslim woman in public office in North Carolina

By Thomasi McDonald, 18 November

In an election month filled with delayed results, frivolous lawsuits, a recount, and baseless claims of voter fraud, the race for the Durham County Board of Commissioners proved decidedly uncontested.

That's because the outcome was all but sealed in the primary back in March. In deep-blue Durham County, North Carolina, the five Democratic candidates on the ballot all ran unopposed in the general election this month.

When they're sworn in in December, newcomers Nimasheena Burns and Nida Allam will join incumbents Wendy Jacobs, Heidi Carter, and Brenda Howerton. Their victories mean that Durham County will have an all-female board of commissioners for the first time in the commission's 139-year-old history.

Voters also made history by electing Allam, who is the first Muslim woman to hold elected office in the state of North Carolina.

Allam's political career was born out of tragedy in 2015,

when her best friend Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21; her sister, Razan, 19; and Yusor's husband, Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, were shot to death by neighbor Craig Stephen Hicks inside of their condo in Chapel Hill. Authorities later claimed they could not find sufficient evidence to prosecute the triple murder as a hate crime, though Hicks had expressed bitter animus toward Muslims in social media posts.

"I was a bridesmaid in her wedding in December," Allam recently told Cardinal & Pine, referring to Yusor. "And then, in February, she was gone."

Allam, a Triangle native, is the daughter of immigrant parents and a graduate of North Carolina State University. Previously, she worked as a political director for the Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign and as an organizing director for Cheri Beasley, the incumbent N.C. Supreme Court chief justice who is in the throes of a remarkably tight race with conservative challenger Paul Newby.



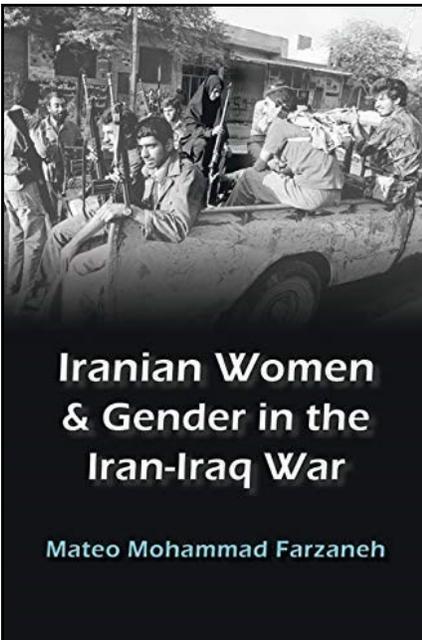
Iranian Women and Gender in the Iran-Iraq War

Mateo Mohammad Farzaneh

Eighteen months after Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979, hundreds of thousands of the country's women participated in the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88) in a variety of capacities. Iran was divided into women of conservative religious backgrounds who supported the revolution and accepted some of the theocratic regime's depictions of gender roles, and liberal women more active in civil society before the revolution who challenged the state's male-dominated gender bias. However, both groups were integral to the war effort, serving as journalists, paramedics, combatants, intelligence officers, medical instructors, and propagandists. Behind the frontlines, women were drivers, surgeons, fundraisers, and community organizers. The war provided women of all social classes the opportunity to assert their role in society, and in doing so, they refused to be marginalized. Despite their significant contributions, women are largely absent from studies on the war. Drawing upon primary sources such as memoirs, wills, interviews, print media coverage, and oral histories, Farzaneh chronicles in copious detail women's participation on the

battlefield, in the household, and everywhere in between.

"A pioneering work. We here in the US hear extremely little about the Iran-Iraq war and what was going on on the ground in Iran during those eight horrible, long years."—Mary Hegland, au-



thor of *Days of Revolution: Political Unrest in an Iranian Village*

"This is a scrupulously researched book on an important subject. By making women and gender its central concern, it offers an original and necessary new perspective on the Iran-Iraq war."—Stephanie Cronin, University of Oxford

"An original and groundbreaking investigation of the many ways Iranian women were vital and central actors in, and unfortunate victims of, the Iran-Iraq War."—Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi, California State University, Fullerton

"Farzaneh has given us an engrossing study of the role of Iranian women in the Iran-Iraq war—active role not only in the home front but also at the actual war front. This is a fascinating look into the popular culture of revolutionary Iran."—Ervand Abrahamian, Baruch College, City University of New York

Mateo Mohammad Farzaneh is associate professor of history at Northeastern Illinois University. He is the author of *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khorasani*.

Publisher: Syracuse University Press

Hardcover 400 pages \$90.00

ISBN: 9780815637028

Date published: December 2020

The Christian Encounter with Muhammad

How Theologians have Interpreted the Prophet

By Charles Tieszen

This book offers a fresh appraisal of Muhammad that considers the widest possible history of the ways in which Christians have assessed his prophethood.

To medieval Christian communities, Muhammad—the leader of a religious and political community that grew quickly and with relative success—was an enigma. Did God really send him as a prophet with a revelation? Was the political success of the community he founded a divine validation? Or were he and his followers inspired by something evil?

Despite their attempts, modern Christians continued to be puzzled by Muhammad. The Qur'an provided a framework for understanding and honouring Jesus; was it possible for Christians to reciprocate with regard to Muhammad? This book applies the same analysis to both medieval and modern assessments of Muhammad, in order to demonstrate the continuities and disparities present in literature from the two eras.

Review

"Throughout the centuries, Christian writings on Muhammad varied in tone

though not so much in content. In response to Muslim veneration of Muhammad's prophecy, Christians accused Muhammad of being both a false prophet and an unwitting Christian. Using a range of Christian perspectives from different historical con-

texts, Charles Tieszen has written an informed, accessible and very valuable contribution to the growing literature on Christian-Muslim studies." —Mona Siddiqui, Professor of Islamic and Interreligious Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

"This is an extremely well-researched and careful presentation of Christian perceptions of Muhammad from late antiquity to modern times, from the Legend of Sergius-Ba'ira to Professor Lamin Sanneh. Each chapter will prove an invaluable resource for those seeking a deeper understanding of the long history of interaction between Christians and Muslims."

—Sandra Toenies Keating, Professor of Theology, Providence College, USA

About the Author

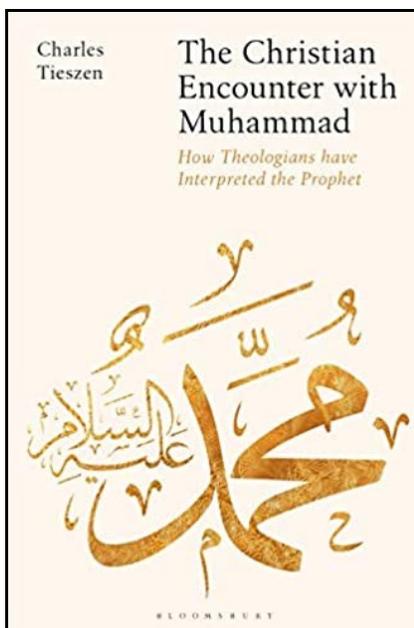
Charles Tieszen is SIS Adjunct Professor for Islamic studies and Christian-Muslim relations at Fuller Theological Seminary, US. He is Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and an editor for the project *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*. He has most recently published *Cross Veneration in the Medieval Islamic World* (I.B. Tauris, 2017) and *Theological Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (2018).

Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic

Hardcover 232 pages \$115.00

ISBN: 978-1350191211

Date published: (November 12, 2020)



Eyes open at the face of death

8. IF WE DELAY THE PENALTY FOR THEM FOR A DEFINITE TERM, THEY ARE SURE TO SAY, "WHAT KEEPS IT BACK?" AH! ON THE DAY IT (ACTUALLY) REACHES THEM, NOTHING WILL TURN IT AWAY FROM THEM, AND THEY WILL BE COMPLETELY ENCIRCLED BY THAT WHICH THEY USED TO MOCK AT!

9. IF WE GIVE MAN A TASTE OF MERCY FROM OURSELVES, AND THEN WITHDRAW IT FROM HIM, BEHOLD! HE IS IN DESPAIR AND (FALLS INTO) BLASPHEMY.

10. BUT IF WE GIVE HIM A TASTE OF (OUR) FAVOURS AFTER ADVERSITY HATH TOUCHED HIM, HE IS SURE TO SAY, "ALL EVIL HAS DEPARTED FROM ME:" BEHOLD! HE FALLS INTO EXULTATION AND PRIDE.

11. NOT SO DO THOSE WHO SHOW PATIENCE AND CONSTANCY, AND WORK RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR THEM IS FORGIVENESS (OF SINS) AND A GREAT REWARD.

(HUD)

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This is our website. Have visited it: It will put you face-to-face with an alternative world, full of spirituality, morality coupled with modern outlooks and perspectives. We want to hear your views on its contents, layout and general quality.

Join us in our Noon and Afternoon prayers
Everyday
at 12.00

This is something that is very personal and important to me. I hope that you will learn and benefit from it. Let me begin by saying "Bismillah".

When I first started University I had met another Muslim brother. We had become good friends, but this friendship was not like any other ordinary friendship, I would have done anything for him, he was like my real brother. During our last year of University, this brother of mine announced that he was engaged and that he was to be married after he graduates this year and finds himself a job. I was glad for him and so was he.

He talked non stop about getting married, I was sort of getting jealous of him because the brother had it made for him, finishing school, getting married, and especially coming from a wealthy family.

One day this brother was to meet me at the coffee shop. He showed up, but astonishingly he wasn't smiling and wasn't talking about his fiancée. I asked him what was wrong, he asked if we could talk somewhere privately and we did. Finally I knew why he was upset.

He had told me that he found out that he had a brain tumor which was malignant, which meant it had become cancerous. When he told me the news his voice was quivering and tears were streaming down his cheeks.

I had never seen him like this before. I tried keeping in my tears and I tried not to show that I was hurt also. I was burning up inside and things were racing through my mind. I kept thinking how could have this happened? A man who had everything made and had everything perfect. I kept it inside because I did not want him to see me upset.

I saw this brother slowly go down. He had to drop out of school at his last year because he began to lose his memory and he started to repeat himself over again. He did not have a chance at school without his memory. This brother was intelligent, but after he became lost.

He had told his fiancée and her family and her parents did not want their daughter to marry him, because he had no job and basically no future.

This was hard for him, I remember he would cry to me about her and how he cared for her and how hopeless he felt.

Later the brother had problems writing and his right eyesight was fading. The tumor was on the left side of his brain so it affected everything on his right. Because of his memory loss the brother soon forgot suras and he even forgot how to pray. A year later his right arm was paralyzed and his eyesight was taken away from him.

It was the hardest thing for me to see. The brother I loved so much was going through so much. I began coming over everyday helping him recite suras.

When I was reciting sura Fatiha to him and he was slowly repeating after me. I looked at him and I thought, This was the same brother who

was so intelligent and was to finish school, this was the same brother who came from such a wealthy family, this was the same brother who talked for days about getting married and raising a family, this was the same brother who had everything. But now he can barely remember what I said to him ten minutes ago, he can't get married, and now he is struggling to read Qur'an, he was not much of a practicing Muslim so it was harder for him to recite the Qur'an.

This man was now turning towards Allah, he dropped EVERYTHING and turned towards Allah. Allah gave him everything and he could take everything away just as easily.

A month ago, I had gotten a call saying that the brother passed away and that his janaza is today. I washed his body with a couple of other brothers and I saw his lifeless body. He was buried and after I returned home. The next day I sat down wondering to myself about the power of Allah. My brother's death made me realize that we forget what our purpose of being here is for: To serve Allah. You could have everything, but do you have anything that is important? I spent six years knowing this brother, and caring for him. I never once shed a tear when he was alive and not even when he passed away. But the day after his death I did cry because I thought about the power of Allah.



A person's tongue can give you the taste of his heart.

IBN AL-QAYYIM

When you tear out a man's tongue, you are not proving him a liar, you're only telling the world that you fear what he might say.

GEORGE RR MARTIN