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We stand for:

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

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Abrar

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Revisiting women issues and rights

The Karbala epic had contributed to understanding the dynamics of Islamic politics and social roles. In addition to the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and his supporters, the role of Muslim women can be investigated objectively to establish the nature and extent of this role. Imam Hussain's sister, Zainab, illustrated eloquently this role over a period of 70 days. That role has remained a beacon for women who wanted to embrace the struggle to achieve freedom and dignity. However, Zainab's role cannot be confined to that brief period. Before and after Karbala she continued to provide leadership, wisdom and steadfastness. These roles need to be closely investigated and studied. In those difficult times her performance had baffled many who did not expect a grief-stricken woman to remain composed and in full control of the situation.

In today's world, the debate on the role and rights of women has continued. In the past few weeks the plight of Afghan women became the main theme of discussion on how they would fare under the Taliban rule. The previous experience 25 years ago under the first rule of Taliban women were ill-treated and denied the right even to study. Such a treatment is not in line with the Islamic teachings or traditions. The early women of Islam had played their full roles in shouldering their duties. They migrated to Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia) with men. They endure the hardship of travel, crossing mountains and rough seas with primitive means. Then they joined the early Muslims during the three year siege at Abu Talib's Valley in Mecca imposed by Quraish to punish the pioneers of the new religion of Islam. They endured hunger and ill-treatment but did not succumb to those hardships. Then they were tortured at the hands of the enemies of the new religion and died under torture. Subsequently women became part of the defenders of Islam, observing their duties at the frontlines in battlefields. In Karbala some women carried arms against the tribal rule and were martyred.

In assessing those

roles, the discourse of women roles and rights appear more trivial: We have been here before to pursue this endless debate. For how long will tribal and traditional values be taken more serious than the divine rules and regulations? The Islamic world has had its fair share of progress in dealing with women rights and roles. Women became prime ministers in several Muslim countries. Bangladesh had two women prime ministers in recent times; Khalida Zia and Sheikh Hassina. Turkey had a woman prime minister in the eighties; Tansu Tciller. Pakistan's woman prime minister, Benazir Bhutto paid the ultimate price. In 199 She was assassinated while serving in office. In Iran women became members of parliament, ministers and vice-presidents. Women also joined the struggle to achieve freedom and rights. They were jailed and tortured in Saudi and Bahraini prisons. Palestine had its lion share of women victims of state terrorism. They were detained, tortured and killed in the street by the occupiers of their lands.

These facts place the debate on the roles and rights of Muslim women at the top of the political and ideological discourse. What are women rights? What are the roles of the other half of the society? The present culture of human exploitation must come to an end. While acknowledging the rights of women, every effort must be made to protect not only those rights but also their dignity and humanity. They must not be subjected to exploitation or transformed into a utility and sex objects. Protection of women is a duty on all, whether from poverty, hunger, exploitation or objectification. A new cultural approach is needed to enlighten women especially the young of their innate right for dignity, respect and humanisation. The feminist movements need to approach the issue of women rights on solid foundation of knowledge drawn from human experiences, religious teachings and the principles of equality, dignity and other natural human values. Exploitation must be quantified in relation to women and criminalised. All women must live with their full rights observed and respected.



Commemoration of two Shia Muslim scholars

Abrar's weekly meeting on Thursday 9th September was dedicated to the two senior religious scholars who passed away in the first week of this month. Ayatullah Sayed Mohammad Saeed Al Hakim died in the Iraqi city of Najaf on Friday 3rd September of a sudden heart attack. He was 87 and was one of the four top scholars led by Sayed Sistani. Sheikh Abdul Amir Qablan died on Saturday 4th September. He was the Grand Shia Mufti of Lebanon before his retirement several



years ago. Sayed Munthir Al Hakim talked about Ayatullah Mohammad Saeed Al Hakim. He said that knowledge is wealth. The Islamic tradition says that knowledge

protects the person, while the person protects the material wealth. He presented a religious view of knowledge especially the religious. The grand jurists are the keepers of the divine knowledge. They are missed only when they die. One of the Islamic traditions says: There are four kinds of knowledge; The first is to know your God, the second is to know what he does with you, the third is to know what He wants from you. The fourth is to know that who may take you out of your religion. Knowledge is to know God, the Creator and what God has done for this universe. Then to know

yourself, mankind and the human society. Man must know his duties. The treaties of rights by Imam Ali ibn Al Hussain details the rights of people, their duties towards God, the rights of the body and limbs, the society, the family, neighbours, the leader and the public. The scholars are responsible to uphold the Islamic law and protect it from the disbelievers, exaggerations and distortions. Our religious scholars are the leaders according to the teachings of the prophet's household. Knowledge is the big reality which distinguishes God and which defines His names.

Sheikh Hassan Sharifa (the Imam of Al Safa Mosque and member of the Supreme Islamic Shia Council in Lebanon) said that Al Hakim was a great character whom I had visited in Najaf when I went to visit Imam Ali's shrine. He told me



about his imprisonment and his suffering there. He was a scholar and teacher who taught Highest levels at the Najaf seminary. While in prison he refused to retreat. He was an author and teacher before prison. When he was in jail he used cigarette butts to write one while he was observing the execution of other scholars. He was repeatedly harassed by the Ba'athist regime. When the Americans entered Iraq, he was asked by people how to deal with them. He referred them to Grand Ayatullah Sistani for directions. Religious leaders must know their duty and what to do in their situations. When Imam Hussain talked to his brother, Mohammad ibn Al Hanafiya his words were clear: I have not revolted to spread corruption, but to seek reform in the community of my grandfather (Prophet Mohammad). The roles and circumstances change but the duty remains. In Lebanon there have always been Islamic seminaries from which scholars graduated (in Kasrawan, Tripoli, Nabtiya etc). These seminaries played a role in some political upheavals. There was also migration by the scholars. The family of Al Sadr migrated to Najaf in the Ottoman era. The important thing is to convey the message. The scholars had played crucial roles to keep the religious rituals at difficult times. During the time of the Religious scholars played crucial roles to continue the rituals especially in the time of the Ottomans. They also had a role

in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Sheikh Abdul Hssain Sharafuddin was prominent in the South. In those times the scholars did not have power, but now they are part of the government. This became possible after Sayed Moosa Al Sadr founded the Supreme Council. The late Sheikh Abdul Amir Qabalan played big role to build a bridge with the others. He helped the poor and the orphans. They played part against the confusion (fitna). They defended the Christians at Dair Ahmar at the beginning of Lebanon's civil war in 1975. Sheikh Qabalan and Sayed Moosa Al Sadr stayed at the monastery to defend it. In 1978 when Israel invaded the South of Litani River Qabalan and Al Sadr stayed together against it until Sayed Al Sadr was kidnapped by Qaddafi during a visit to Libya.

Imam Sajjad's martyrdom

The martyrdom of Imam Ali ibn Al Hussain was commemorated by Abrar at its weekly meeting on Thursday 26th August. Sheikh Faisal Al Kadhimi delivered a lamentation session highlighting the life of the Imam. He was present during the battle of Karbala but was sick and did not take part in the fighting. After Karbala he stayed at his grandfather's shrine (Prophet Mohammad) and received the scholars and students. He initiated the lamentation culture that has remained until today. He was the also the first to make the visit to his father's grave. It was a challenge to the Umayyad authority at the time. He also visited the grave of Imam Ali and recited the "Jami'a" prayers. Thirdly, he was known for his generosity. While in Medina he heard a man shouting: O' Muslims, I am a stranger. The Imam approached him and helped him. Among the habits he had kept was weeping when he wanted to drink water. He would remember the thirst of his father and the rest of the family in Karbala. He established meetings and lamentations for his father for 38 years. But he left behind a good collection of prayers and supplications. He also left behind one of the first treatise on human rights.



German prosecutors search ministries for money laundering

German prosecutors said on Thursday they had seized documents at the finance and justice ministries as part of an investigation into possible obstruction of justice by a government agency that is responsible for investigating money laundering.

Prosecutors said in a statement they had been investigating the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) since 2020 because the agency had not forwarded reports made by banks of possible money laundering to the police and the judiciary.

The investigation was triggered after a bank reported to the FIU suspicious payments to Africa of more than 1 million euros (\$1.18 million), that the bank believed might be linked to trafficking of arms and drugs and terrorism financing.

The FIU took note of the report but did not forward it to law enforcement agencies. Prosecutors said they were also looking into the fact that since the FIU took over control of money laundering in 2017, reports of suspicious activity have dropped drastically.

Prosecutors want to establish to what extent officials at the ministries were involved in decisions by the FIU.

The FIU is part of the Federal Customs Administration, which is controlled by the finance ministry. (\$1 = 0.8453 euros)

Pentagon chief: al-Qaida may seek comeback in Afghanistan

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the al-Qaida extremist group that used Afghanistan as a staging base to attack United States 20 years ago may attempt to regenerate there following an American withdrawal that has left the Taliban in power.

Austin spoke to a small group of reporters in Kuwait City at the conclusion of a four-day tour of Persian Gulf states. He said the United States is prepared to prevent an al-Qaida comeback in Afghanistan that would threaten the United States.



"The whole community is kind of watching to see what happens and whether or not al-Qaida has the ability to regenerate in Afghanistan," he said. "The nature of al-Qaida and (the Islamic State group) is they will always attempt to find space to grow and regenerate, whether it's there, whether it's in Somalia, or whether it's in any other ungoverned space. I think that's the nature of the organization."

The Taliban had provided al-Qaida with sanctuary while it ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. The U.S. invaded and overthrew the Taliban after it refused to turn over al-Qaida leaders following the Sept. 11, 2001 attack on the United States. During the course of the 20-year U.S. war, al-Qaida was vastly diminished, but questions have arisen about its future prospects with the Taliban back in Kabul. "We put the Taliban on notice that we expect them to not allow that to happen," Austin said, referring to the possibility of al-Qaida using Afghanistan as a staging base in the future.

In a February 2020 agreement with the Trump administration, Taliban leaders pledged not to support al-Qaida or other extremist groups that would threaten the United States. But U.S.

WHO criticizes rich countries over hoarding COVID vaccines,

The World Health Organization (WHO) has criticized developed countries for hoarding COVID vaccines and other medical tools leading to prolonging of the pandemic infection.

World richer countries have been in hot water as WHO denounces them for hoarding COVID-19 vaccines while several underdeveloped countries are struggling for jabs to fight and contain the pandemic infection.



Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's internal technical lead for COVID-19 said, "It is not just unfair, it is not just immoral, it is prolonging the pandemic and it is resulting in people dying."

This is while a little more than 230 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been sent to 139 countries under COVAX despite an earlier announcement for delivering 2 billion doses for lower income countries by the end of 2021.

Make mental health a priority across the board, UN chief urges

Mental health and psychosocial support must be seen as integral to all humanitarian, peacebuilding and development programs across the United Nation, Secretary-General António Guterres said on Wednesday.

The UN chief was speaking at a high-level event on Mental Health Interventions for Peacebuilding in Conflict and Humanitarian settings.

"Vulnerability and mental health problems are part of our collective human experience and should be treated as seri-

ously as physical health issues, including during a global pandemic," he said.

For Guterres, peacebuilding, mental health and psychosocial support are deeply interconnected. He reminded that "people who have suffered losses, attacks, family separations and gender-based violence, carry grievances and wounds that can perpetuate repetition and cycles of violence."

The goal of the event was to discuss successes in the field, highlight best practices and outline a way forward that could be applied to all areas of the UN's work.

Examples of promising initiatives to support mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, included programs in northeast Nigeria, the Philippines, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

The Secretary-General commended the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Reference Group, which has developed a wide range of resources during the pandemic, some of which have been translated into more than 140 languages.

He also encouraged donors, governments and humanitarian agencies to scale up their investments in mental health and psychosocial support, saying it is "a vital component in supporting peaceful, resilient and inclusive communities and societies."

Taliban announces new caretaker government

Taliban spokesman announced in a press conference on Tuesday the formation of new caretaker government to be led by Mohammad Hassan Akhund, acting prime minister, three weeks after the takeover of the war-torn country.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman said in this press conference Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar as the acting deputy premier, Sirajuddin Haqqani as interior minister, Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob as defense minister and Amir Khan Muttaqi, a Taliban negotiator in Doha, was appointed foreign minister.



According to a statement issued by Mullah Habitullah Akhunzada hours after the announcement of the interim government, the new cabinet will start its work immediately.

The newly formed government in Afghanistan includes no women. At least three demonstrations were held in Kabul since the takeover of the country by Taliban.

Zainab; the flag bearer of the Hussaini Revolution

By: Syed Zafar Mehdi

Ashura was marked across the world with tremendous religious fervor this weekend. Massive processions were taken out in different countries to pay glowing tribute to the martyrs of Karbala. Mourners wore black dresses, recited soul-stirring elegies and reaffirmed their pledge to uphold the sacrosanct principles exemplified by the grandson of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) on the desert plains of Karbala more than 1400 years ago.

Ashura is over but Muharram is not. The tragedy of Karbala does not culminate with the killing of Imam Hussain and his companions. It begins after that. Imam Hussain's (AS) mandate is over. The 'Master of the Martyrs' has returned to his Lord, well pleased, obliging the command of his creator in Surah Fajr.

Hussain (AS) chose death with dignity rather than life with humiliation, raising the slogan of 'Hayhaat mina Zilla' (never to humiliation). He gave blood to revive human values, to uproot despotism, to pave the ground for Islamic awakening and social reformation. He accomplished his task.

Zainab bint Ali's (SA) mandate has now begun. Her ordeal has also begun. She will be paraded through the crowded marketplaces of Kufa and Shaam, manacled and chained, along with other female members and children of the holy household. Yet, she sees beauty in her ordeal. The beauty of God.

Zainab (SA) is no ordinary woman. She is the daughter of Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) and Fatima bint Mohammad (SA). She is Fasihah (skillfully fluent), Balighah (intensely eloquent) and Alimah Ghayr Mu'allamah (who has knowledge without being taught).

Her mission is equally important, to reveal the truth, to unmask the tyrants, to be an eloquent tongue of her brother's blood.

Martyrs gave blood and now survivors have to convey the message of that blood to future generations. Zainab's (SA) mandate is heavier than her brother's mandate. If blood has no message, it remains unspoken in history. She is well aware of her mandate and responsibilities.

As Dr. Ali Shariati reminds us, those who died committed a Hussainic act, those who remain must perform a Zainabic act.

Hussain (AS) is the martyr of Karbala and Zainab (SA) is the messenger of Karbala. We have to choose either blood or the message, to be a martyr like Hussain (AS) or a messenger like Zainab (SA). Fence-sitters have no place in this revolutionary movement that has gripped hearts and minds of people for more than fourteen centuries.

The caravan Hussain (AS) led from Medina to Karbala was led by Zainab (SA) from Karbala to Syria. When the caravan halted in Kufa, Zainab (SA) courageously confronted the people of Kufa who had betrayed her brother after inviting him.

"O people of Kufa! Do you know whose heart you have burned, what blood you have shed, and what sanctity you have violated? You have done a monstrous deed, something for which the heavens are about to split asunder and so is the earth, and for which the mountains crumble. You have done something most defaced, duskiest, most horrible as much as the fill of the earth and of the sky," said the daughter of 'the leader of faithful'.

When the caravan reached Yazid's court in Damascus, Zainab (SA) stood up and spoke with the valor and eloquence of her father and the indomitable spirit of her brother. Her sermon shook the foundation of Yazid's mighty empire.

"O Yazid! I swear by Allah that I do not fear anyone except Him and do not complain to anyone but Him. You may employ your deceit and trickery, but I swear by Allah the shame and disgrace you have earned by the treatment meted out to us cannot be eradicated," she said. The people present in the court were astonished, some were crying and some others were feeling remorseful.

Zainab (SA) carried out many responsibilities in the aftermath of Karbala. She protected the ailing son of her brother when the tents were set ablaze by the marauding

soldiers of Yazid. She consoled little children like Roqayya and Sukaina when everything that belonged to them was forcibly snatched away. She led the caravan that was accompanied with the severed head of her brother perched atop a spear.

Zainab was crestfallen with grief but she stood firm because the mandate given to her was heavy. She wrote and recited *mar-siyas* (poetic elegies) that jolted people out of their slumber and eventually led to the decline and fall of Yazidi empire. Today, nobody remembers Yazid, Ibn Ziyad, Umar Saad or Shimr. And everyone remembers Hussain, Abulfazl Abbas, Ali Akbar, Qasim, Asghar. Zainab is the savior of Karbala, who redefined patience and resilience in the face of insurmountable odds.

Zainab (SA) kept alive the movement of Karbala and inspired future generations to unmask Yazids and Ibn Ziyads of their time.

Her courage, steadfastness and resilience gives sense of hope and optimism to those who believe in the righteousness of their cause, like the women in Kashmir, women in Yemen, women in Palestine, women in Syria, women in Afghanistan. They are the flagbearers of Zainab (SA).

Last week, on Muharram 8, pictures of police personnel beating women during a Muharram procession in Indian controlled Kashmir, leading made it to newspapers and news channels across the world. Muharram processions remain banned in Kashmir since 1990, which human rights defenders have termed 'blatant mockery of religious freedom'.

These women, part of a peaceful Muharram procession, carried banners of 'Ya Hussain', when they were confronted by a battalion of policemen carrying guns and sticks. The women stood their ground even when the shameless policemen started to smash them with big sticks. They

reminded one of Zainab's (SA) struggle in carrying the same flag through Kufa and Shaam.

As Dr. Shariati reminds us, it was Zainab (SA) who stood against and confronted the ruling oppressive power and who destroyed all resistance, and it was Zainab (SA) who spread the thoughts and ideas of Hussain's (AS) school of revolution and martyrdom everywhere. She took the drops of the blood of Karbala as a symbol of courage and justice to all places and all times.



Tampa Muslim woman looks back on the aftermath of 9/11

By Mitch Perry Tampa 9/9/2021

TAMPA, Fla. — While the focus this week in the U.S. media is on the 20th anniversary of the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, the negative fallout for many American Muslims lasted far longer than on that horrific day.

In April of 2004, Shari Akram was operating a jewelry kiosk at the Westshore Mall in Tampa when she was verbally and physically confronted in an altercation with a husband, wife and their daughter who told her to “get out of (America)” and said that her religion was “hateful and violent.”

“They started yelling and basically blaming me for terrorist attacks and my faith and tried to grab my scarf from my neck,” she recounted. The incident took place shortly after the Madrid train bombings of 2004, where a Spanish court ultimately convicted five men of Islamic terrorist activities.

“It was really just one incident – you could say maybe the worst incident – out of a series of incidents,” she adds. “It wasn’t something that only happened to me. Most of the women in the community who are visibly Muslim have a story to share.”

A New Hampshire native born to Christian parents, Akram moved to Tampa to attend USF in 1995 and became a Muslim in 1996 at the age of 20. She’s worked for the past four years as the donor and grant manager with the Council on American-Islamic Relations- Florida (CAIR) based in Tampa.

She says that for the first five years after she became a Muslim, she opted not to wear the hijab, a religious headscarf. But five months after the terrorist attacks, she decided to start wearing it, at a time when some Muslim women were not because of safety concerns. She says it was a pivotal decision that changed her life.

“I was just a white woman (laughs) walking around very comfortably, but once I put a scarf on my head after 9/11, I learned what it’s like to be marginalized.”

A recent poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 53 percent of Americans have unfavorable views towards Islam, compared with 42 percent who have favorable ones. “That stands in contrast to Americans’ opinions about Christianity and Judaism,” the AP reports, “for which most respondents expressed favorable views.”

Another recent survey by the Pew Research Center finds that 53 percent say they don’t personally know anyone who is Muslim, and a corresponding number (52 percent) say they know “not much or nothing at all” about Islam. However, Pew says that Americans who aren’t Muslim but personally know someone who is Muslim “are more likely to have a positive view of Muslims, and they are less likely to believe that Islam en-

courages violence more than other religions.”

“We fear what we don’t know,” Akram says. “And a lot of times religious communities tend to be rather insular.”

She believes that 9/11 was a “catalyst” for the Islamic community in the U.S. to start building bridges to the political establishment and the broader society. She says it’s important to have those personal contacts so people can realize that “we’re just like everybody else.”

Akram has worked for CAIR since 2017. She says that her organization has worked effectively to fight for the civil rights and civil liberties for the Muslim community.

“We do a lot of community outreach work so that we can prevent discrimination from happening in the first place,” specifically mentioning how the group trained thousands of Hillsborough County Sheriff officers on the cultural and religious nuances when working with the Muslim community.

According to the Pew Research Center, Muslims will replace Jews as the nation’s second-largest religious group after Christians. And by 2050, the U.S. Muslim population is projected to reach 8.1 million – more than twice their current share of the population.



20 years after 9/11, Muslim Americans still

A car passed, the driver’s window rolled down and the man spat an epithet at two little girls wearing their hijabs: “Terrorist!”

It was 2001, mere weeks after the twin towers at the World Trade Center fell, and 10-year-old Shahana Hanif and her younger sister were walking to the local mosque from their Brooklyn home.

Unsure, afraid, the girls ran.

As the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks approaches, Hanif can still recall the shock of the moment, her confusion over how anyone could look at her, a child, and see a threat.

“It’s not a nice, kind word. It means violence, it means dangerous. It is meant to shock whoever ... is on the receiving end of it,” she says.

But the incident also spurred a determination to speak out for herself and others that has helped get her to where she is today: a community organizer strongly favored to win a seat on the New York City Council in the upcoming municipal election.

Like Hanif, other young American Muslims have grown up under the shadow of 9/11. Many have faced hos-

tility and surveillance, mistrust and suspicion, questions about their Muslim faith and doubts over their Americanness.

They’ve also found ways forward, ways to fight back against bias, to organize, to craft nuanced personal narratives about their identities. In the process, they’ve built bridges, challenged stereotypes and carved out new spaces for themselves.

There is “this sense of being Muslim as a kind of important identity marker, regardless of your relationship with Islam as a faith,” says Eman Abdelhadi, a sociologist at The University of Chicago who studies Muslim communities. “That’s been one of the main effects in people’s lives ... it has shaped the ways the community has developed.”

A poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted ahead of the 9/11 anniversary found that 53% of Americans have unfavorable views toward Islam, compared with 42% who have favorable ones. This stands in contrast to Americans’ opinions about Christianity and Judaism, for which most respondents expressed favorable views.

Continued on page (6)

Why some Muslim women feel empowered wearing hijab, a headscarf

Some Americans believe that the Islamic faith is oppressive for women. In the West, particularly in France, the hijab, or headscarf, that many Muslim women wear has become a symbol of this perceived oppression.

This article will explain some of the complex issues that go into many Muslim women's choice to wear the hijab, including why some women see it as a mark of empowerment. It will also draw attention to some of the global Muslim feminist movements that often go unnoticed in the Western world.

Sociologist Caitlin Killian explains that Jewish, Christian and Hindu women have covered their heads since pre-Islamic days.

For some Muslim women today, wearing a hijab can be a religious act – a way of demonstrating their submission to God. The Quran instructs both men and women to observe modesty in their dress and behavior. However, Muslim women's clothing isn't entirely about adherence to faith. It has been used in the past – and present – as an assertion of identity.

Under colonial rule, Muslim women were encouraged to be more like European women and remove the veil. As demands for independence from colonial rule grew, the veil, Killian says, became a "symbol of national identity and opposition to the West."

Today, some Muslim women in America may wear the hijab as a way of asserting their pride in the face of Islamophobia. World Hijab Day, celebrated on Feb. 1, starting in 2013, came about through the efforts of Nazma Khan, an immigrant to the United States from Bangladesh, who had been shamed over wearing a headscarf. She decided to start a day when both Muslim and non-Muslim women could experience wearing the head garment.

Even so, in much of the Western world, the headscarf continues to be seen as representative of Muslim women's oppression. In Switzerland, voters approved legislation in March 2021 to ban face coverings, while France is pushing for a more restrictive policy on hijabs.

In a judgment on March 14, 2017, the Court of Justice of the European Union, which interprets EU law, allowed private companies in France to bar employees from wearing "religious, political and philosophical signs" in the interest of "neutrality."

Sociologist Z. Fareen Parvez says the anti-headscarf legislation was a "turning point" in the lives of Muslim women looking for acceptance and integration in French society. The headscarf is not just a religious symbol for many of the women; it is a way of being.

But this focus on Muslim women's clothing takes attention away from other issues and how Muslim feminist movements are trying to bring about change. In Indonesia, for example, female Muslim religious scholars, or ulamas, are helping change how Islam is understood and practiced.

As sociologist Rachel Rinaldo says, the past three decades in Indonesia have seen the emergence of a new generation of female religious leaders who are interpreting the Quran in a way that is empowering for women. The word of female ulamas is more accepted, compared to women's rights activists, explains Rinaldo, as they are trained Islamic scholars.

A 2017 conference of female Muslim religious scholars held in Indonesia, with participants from Kenya, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, issued fatwas – non-binding religious edicts – against child marriage, sexual abuse and environmental destruction.

The point is that, like other faiths, Islam is a multifaceted religion, and Muslim women are choosing how they want to be heard and seen.

This article was reviewed for accuracy by Jessica Marglin, Associate Professor of Religion at USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

Fact: Female ulamas in Indonesia go back to the 17th century. Queen Tajul Alam Safiatuddin Syah ruled over the Islamic kingdom of Aceh (now Indonesia's northernmost province) for 35 years and commissioned several important books of Islamic commentaries and theology. At a time when female rulers anywhere in the world were un-

sual, she was the primary upholder of religious authority in what was then a prosperous and peaceful kingdom. – From an article written by Rachel Rinaldo, Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder.

American Muslims

Continued from page 5

Mistrust and suspicion of Muslims didn't start with 9/11, but the attacks dramatically intensified those animosities.

Accustomed to being ignored or targeted by low-level harassment, the country's wide-ranging and diverse Muslim communities were foisted into the spotlight, says Youssef Chouhoud, a political scientist at Christopher Newport University in Virginia.

"Your sense of who you were was becoming more formed, not just Muslim but American Muslim," he says. "What distinguished you as an American Muslim? Could you be fully both, or did you have to choose? There was a lot of grappling with what that meant."

In Hanif's case, there was no blueprint to navigate the complexities of that time. "Fifth-grader me wasn't naïve or too young to know Muslims are in danger," she later wrote in an essay about the aftermath of 9/11. "...Flashing an American flag from our first-floor windows didn't make me more American. Born in Brooklyn didn't make me more American."

A young Hanif gathered neighborhood friends, and an older cousin helped them write a letter to President George W. Bush asking for protection. "We knew," she says, "that we would become like warriors of this community."



A woman at a protest against Islamophobia in Toulouse, France, shows a drawing reading 'My veil, my choice, free' in French.



Worlds Apart

A Documentary History of US–Iranian Relations, 1978–2018

AUTHORS:

Malcolm Byrne, National Security Archive/George Washington University
Kian Byrne, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington
A relationship beset with extraordinary acrimony, the US and Iran rarely see eye-to-eye, if only to avoid war or nuclear catastrophe. What is at the core of this troubled rivalry that has stymied

policymakers and scholars alike? Using a carefully selected collection of White House, CIA, State Department, and other records, *Worlds Apart* provides a comprehensive answer to this question: starting from the 1979 revolution and hostage crisis, through the Iran–Iraq War and the spread of radical Islam, to 9/11 and the nuclear impasse, to the 2009 Green Movement and the Obama and Trump presidencies. The records, which form the heart of the book, offer a rare, unfiltered view into the perspectives and experiences of the American and Iranian governments over 40 years. Providing timelines, glossaries, discussion questions, and a guide on reading declassified documents, Byrne and Byrne explore this complicated relationship accessibly and innovatively in this unique documentary history.

Reviews & endorsements

'Four decades ago Iran and the US substituted a close relationship for marked hostility. Byrne and Byrne have brought together in this book a collection of key documents that mark the major turning points - and the viewpoints of the principal actors - of these tumultuous decades. *Worlds Apart*, the title the authors have chosen for their fascinating collection, is strikingly apt. Their book is a page-turner and a significant contribution to the study of US–Iranian relations since

the Islamic revolution.' Haleh Esfandiari, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

'Through a series of significant documents, expertly given context in an accessible fashion, Byrne and Byrne offer both novices and old hands a unique and reliable tracing of the difficult, often muddled and damaging, history of US–Iran relations during and since the revolution.' Farideh Farhi, Independent scholar

'An excellent collection of documents covering all of the major issues in US–Iran relations during the past forty years with introductory material that provides essential context. This will be an essential reference source for anyone interested in this important topic.' Mark Gasiorowski, Professor Emeritus, Tulane University

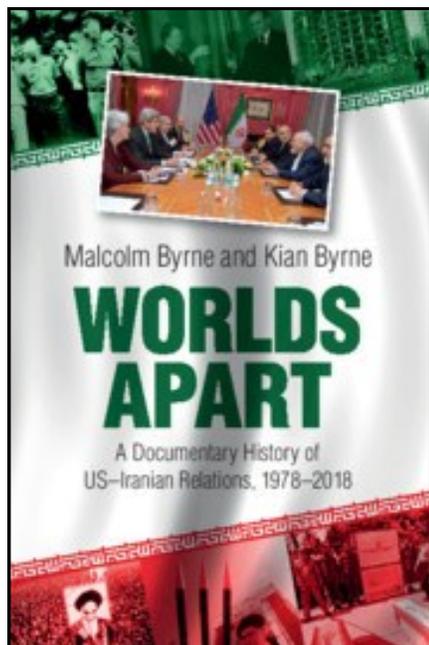
'It's not a pretty story, but it should be required reading to understand how our two countries have been stuck on a road to nowhere for forty years. It's all here: the ignorance, the obliviousness, and the insights ignored. Thanks to the authors for giving us the raw material of history free of biases and personal agendas.' John Limbert, Retired American diplomat and author of *Believers: Love and Death in Tehran*

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Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought

Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden

By Roxanne L. Euben
and Muhammad Qasim Zaman

This anthology of key primary texts provides an unmatched introduction to Islamist political thought from the early twentieth century to the present, and serves as an invaluable guide through the storm of polemic, fear, and confusion that swirls around Islamism today. Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman gather a broad selection of texts from influential Islamist thinkers and place these figures and their writings in their multifaceted political and historical contexts. The selections presented here in English translation include writings of Ayatollah Khomeini, Usama bin Laden, Muslim Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna, and Moroccan Islamist leader Nadia Yassine, as well as the Hamas charter, an interview with a Taliban commander, and the final testament of 9/11 hijacker Muhammad Ata. Illuminating the content and political appeal of Islamist thought, this anthology brings into sharp relief the common-

alities in Islamist arguments about gender, democracy, and violence, but it also reveals significant political and theological disagreements among thinkers too often grouped together and dismissed as extremists or terrorists. No other anthology better illustrates the diversity of Islamist thought, the complexity of its intellectual and political contexts, or the variety of ways in which it relates to other intellectual and religious trends in the contemporary Muslim world.

Roxanne L. Euben is the Ralph Emerson and Alice Freeman Palmer Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College. **Muhammad Qasim Zaman** is the Robert H. Niehaus '77 Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Religion at Princeton University.

"Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought presents representative writings of that radical minority of Muslims who reject political quietism, resist alien intrusions, and call for a divinely mandated state and society as set out in the Koran and as exemplified in the

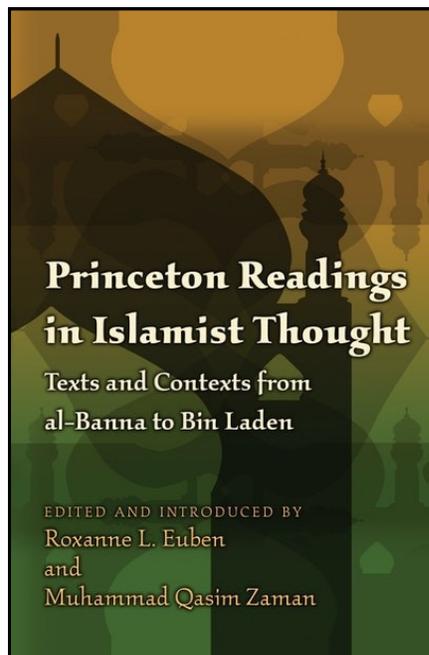
early Muslim community."—Foreign Affairs

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16. IT IS WE WHO HAVE SET OUT THE ZODIACAL SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS, AND MADE THEM FAIR-SEEMING TO (ALL) BEHOLDERS;
 17. AND (MORREOVER) WE HAVE GUARDED THEM FROM EVERY EVIL SPIRIT ACCURRED:
 18. BUT ANY THAT GAINS A HEARING BY STEALTH, IS PURSUED BY A FLAMING FIRE, BRIGHT (TO SEE).
 19. AND THE EARTH WE HAVE SPREAD OUT (LIKE A CARPET); SET THEREON MOUNTAINS FIRM AND IMMOVABLE; AND PRODUCED THEREIN ALL KINDS OF THINGS IN DUE BALANCE.
 20. AND WE HAVE PROVIDED THEREIN MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE,- FOR YOU AND FOR THOSE FOR WHOSE SUSTENANCE YE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE.
 21. AND THERE IS NOT A THING BUT ITS (SOURCES AND) TREASURES (INEXHAUSTIBLE) ARE WITH US; BUT WE ONLY SEND DOWN THEREOF IN DUE AND ASCERTAINABLE (AL-HIJR)

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The ant prays for rain

Once there was a big famine in Palestine. It was during the time of the Prophet, Prophet Sulaiman (King Solomon). He came out with his people and proceeded to an open place in the desert to pray for the rains to come. Suddenly, he saw an ant standing on its two legs, raising its hands up towards the sky and saying, "Oh Allah! We are but very small among all Thy creatures. We cannot survive without Thy grace. Please bestow upon us Thy sustenance and do not punish us because of the sins of human beings. Please send down the rains so that trees can grow, farms become green and grains become available and we have our food to eat."

Prophet Sulaiman knew the language of all animals. He told his people, "Let us go home. The prayer of this ant is enough." It then rained heavily and all the land became green and productive.

The ant is an intelligent creature. During warm days it collects and stores grain inside the holes. It knows that during wet and cold months, it would not be able to go out to search for food. For fear that grain may start growing because of wetness, it splits it into two or more pieces. At times, during moonlit nights, it brings the split grains out of the stores for drying and preservation against decay.

The holes under the ground are made very carefully and covered with shelter to prevent the rain water from getting inside the holes. The ant, unlike the other animals, can lift a burden twice its own weight. It is not a selfish creature. When an ant finds some store of food grains, it runs up to its group and takes its fellow ants to that place. It shows everyone of them its own find of the store. They always behave in this manner. They work and live in co-operation with each other.

This shows how the ant works for the group and how each of them fulfils the needs and livelihood of its fellow-beings. How shameful it is for a man, who has no regard for another man; who has no concern for his fellow human beings who could be starving because of want of food.

Once, while Prophet Sulaiman was travelling together with hosts of men, jinn and birds,



they reached a valley of ants.

When the chief of these ants witnessed the pomp and the glory with which Prophet Sulaiman and his companions were approaching toward it. He warned all the ants to get into their holes lest they got trampled and crushed unknowingly by the approaching men and Jinn. Prophet Sulaiman smiled at this warning sounded by the ants' chief, and ordered his companions to wait till the ants went inside their holes. "None of us should hurt any ant while passing over their land", he said.

It is said that Prophet Sulaiman addressed the chief of the ants and said: "How could my people hurt you or your fellow ants when they are floating through air! Don't you know that I am a messenger of God and would never act unfairly?" The chief of the ants replied: "O Messenger of God! My cautioning the ants was not for any hurt that they would suffer but to prevent them getting astray and forgetting the glory of God after seeing your pomp and show."

There is a deep meaning in this event. It shows that even the most humble and smallest of creatures has been endowed with the necessary wisdom to live safely and avoid being hurt as far as possible. It also shows, how even a small ant does have the natural understanding of the true position of Allah. It imparts a lesson that one should not forget the true might and glory of Allah when one experiences a great power and dignity of any creature in this world.

Thus an Ant is one of the most wonderful small creatures in this world. Sura "Naml" (the Ant) in the Holy Qur'an is a chapter named after this creature. Over 1300 years ago, Imam Ali (a) was giving a sermon in Kufa, in which he was describing the beauties of creation in various forms of life. He was referring to small creatures and asking man to study how God made them so small yet so sturdy and strong. He described the ant in these words:

'Look at an ant. How tiny is its body and how delicate are its features! It is such a small creature that it often escapes the eye, and few people care to attach any importance to it among the living beings found on this earth. Look at it and study its ways of life; how it crawls, how it attacks its food; how it lifts a grain so many times heavier than its body, carries it to its hole; how it stores grains; and how in summer it gathers and stocks food for winter and rainy days.'

A calm and modest life brings more happiness than the pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness.

Albert Einstein

I have chosen to be happy because it's good for my health.

Voltaire