

# The Ambition.com

The First Journal for Young Muslims in Canada (since 1987)



Jamada Thani - Sha'ban 1422  
September - October 2001

Greater Toronto's Dependable Source for Islamic News and Views

Vol. 11 No. 5



So which of your Lord's Bounties will you deny?  
(Al-Quran)

## Is Islam a Thing of The Past?

*Islam does not divide life into rigid, watertight compartments.*

by Professor Mohamed Elmasry

Islam is "too old" to be adopted in this age of science. Islam is a thing of the past — many centuries old — and society has "progressed" beyond it. We have moved far ahead of the feudal stage and humanity now breathes the air of a new century, a century of science, enlightenment, and reason. All those mysterious old beliefs of the Dark Ages just don't hold water for modern minds...

These and similar doubts are commonly expressed these days by our so-called "progressive," "lib-

eral" and "enlightened" Muslims. They reveal suspicions that haunt a major section of our intelligentsia and therefore need to be answered. And the answer is quite simple — we must not lose ourselves in the rhythm of seductive rhetoric. Authentic analysis will expose the truth or falsity of much-quoted allegations referring to the supposed decline in the relevance of Islam.

For we touch here on the core of a vital issue: Just what are the criteria on which to judge the adequacy or inadequacy, relevance or obsolescence of a particular way of life? Are arguments of time and space valid? Are we justified in rejecting everything presented in the past as being "obsolete"? Dare we discard or dismiss any traditional system of belief only on the grounds it has lasted for a thousand years or more? If so, of what value is democracy? It was first introduced in Greece more than 2,000 years ago!

Simple logic makes it the height of folly to assume that a practice or belief is useless only because it is many years old. Conversely, the survival of some human value in itself should be food for thought. If a belief system, a custom, a philosophy, has steered its way successfully through the deep and often turbulent oceans of time, that test of age alone shows that it is worth something.

Theories have come and theories have gone. Civilizations have risen and civilizations have perished. Cultures have bloomed and cultures have withered. Yet, Islam has lived from time immemorial. It has endured all eventualities and overcome all obstacles. In the monumental "struggle for existence" it has survived. Is this not sufficient to show its mettle?

When we say "time immemorial," Muslims are asserting the belief that the message of Islam is not a mere

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## The Universality of Calling on Allah

*The prayers of the Prophets portray the most sublime feelings and loftiest aspirations.*

by Imam Faisal Abu Jihad

Du'a or supplication according to Islam is the life and soul of human existence and as the Holy Prophet (pbuh) said, it is "the marrow (or essence) of Divine service." Not only the righteous servants are spoken of in the Qur'an as praying to Allah, but also disbelievers and idolaters are frequently mentioned as calling upon Allah when they find themselves in distress or adversity. Distress makes the latter realise their helplessness and turn their attention back to the true source of all goodness and happiness. However, when Allah has removed their distress and has shown them His special Mercy, they forget themselves and attribute their relief to their own cleverness.

The Qur'an says of such people: "And when affliction touches man, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove from him his affliction, he continues [in disobedience] as if he had never called upon Us to [remove] an affliction that touched him. Thus it is made pleasing to the transgressors that which they have been doing" (10:12).

**The Efficacy of Du'a or Supplication**

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "And when My servants ask you [O Muhammad], concerning Me — indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided" (2:186).

The above verse clearly shows that Allah is close to us at all times and that He answers the call of all those who call upon Him, provided we listen to His orders and we put our trust and faith in Him.

In this age of gross materialism, Du'a may have no great charm for many people. So absorbed is modern man in material pursuits that he may not find time to respond seriously and effectively to the genuine yearnings of his soul. Yet, in the midst of this turmoil, he sometimes finds himself in the grip of a terrible void and his soul reaches out to the Giver of all gifts and in search of spiritual peace and succour. It is in such moments of anguish that one finds solace and comfort in prayers. Prayer is indeed the natural urge of man. Without it, man can only estrange himself from his true self and destroy his noblest feelings.

The efficacy of Du'a does not mean that every object for which a man prays to the Divine Being

should be attained immediately. This is made clear by the Holy Qur'an itself: "And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, who, when disaster strikes them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.' Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided" (2:155-157).

It is the law of Allah that trials and hardships must be undergone even by the faithful, and they must be ready to suffer every kind of loss. However, just as the efficacy of medicine cannot be denied because it does not prove efficacious in all cases, so the efficacy of Du'a or supplication cannot be denied on this ground. Besides, in supplication there is complete surrender and recognition of one's own utter helplessness on the one hand and the recognition of the Supremacy and Power of Almighty Allah, the One and Only Creator of the Heavens

and the Earth. This attitude of mind to which fervent expression is given is itself of inestimable value in stirring up the latent faculties of the soul and enabling the spiritualising of the life of man.

In resorting to Du'a, it does not mean that man may dispense with striving and applying all practical means for the attainment of his object. Such a view is contrary to the Islamic doctrine of the efficacy of supplication. The fact is that there is an indissoluble connection between practical means and prayer. The Holy Qur'an lays down the principle that we should strive hard for the attainment of our objects. It is not for us to sit back and merely raise our hands and expect our supplications to be answered. The Qur'an says:

"And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives" (53:39). Furthermore: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves"

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## Fulfilling the Purpose

*Islam does not tolerate a human being enslaving another human being.*

by Ayub Hamid

People are hired or retained to achieve the goals of their employer or retainer. Ultimately, those who do not serve their purpose are fired or removed from their positions. Similarly, everything we make or buy is made to serve a purpose. When it fails to serve its purpose or loses its usefulness, it is discarded or trashed. That is true for all human creations, without exception. Is it true for Allah's creations as well?

Take human beings, for example. Is there a purpose for their creation? In addition, if they do not fulfil that purpose, will they be trashed?

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (51:56).

The word "worship," however, does not reflect the true meaning of the Arabic word. In English, worship represents paying homage to a deity through some words or songs of praise or by performing some rituals at a certain day of the week or certain time of the year. Beyond that, the person is free to act, as he likes.

The 'ibadah indicated as the purpose of human creation by the Arabic li-ya' budooni is much more

comprehensive than the idea conveyed by "worship." Hence, some people translate li-ya' budooni to mean "that they serve Me." Although "serving" conveys a broader meaning than "worshipping," it still does not fully represent the real connotation of 'ibadah. A servant is a free person who has chosen to serve an employer for certain hours of a day or night to perform only some predefined tasks. After the performance of those tasks and/or passage of the time of service, the person is free to do what he wishes. Even during the hours of service, the employer can lay claim upon only certain skills of the servant, nothing else!

'Ibadah, in fact, connotes "slavery." There is a huge difference between a servant and a slave. A slave is a full-time servant, twenty-four hours per day, every day throughout his life. The master owns the slave and everything the slave has or is able to do. A slave has no freedom. He just submits to the wishes of the master. He is subjugated in every way. That is why Islam does not tolerate a human being enslaving another human being. Human

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Please treat this Islamic Journal with respect!

## Editorial

### Behind the Wall

You hear them. You hear their laughter, their movements. You can feel them scurrying here and there. You are aware of their presence. However, you cannot see them. You wonder if they are real.

No. I am not talking about ghosts. I am talking about the male and female participants of Islamic events in our mosques, who are **strictly** segregated *during* the event, and I am not pointing to the seating arrangement for brothers and sisters on each side of the aisle (or having a choice for those sisters who prefer it that way.) I am talking about putting the actual barriers and partitions between them or by having them in separate areas.

The funniest thing about it is that this segregation is non-existing as soon as the prayer ends or the lecture is over. Outside the mosque, the same people who are prohibited to get even a glimpse of each other are intermingling, greeting each other, and interacting.

How does this seem to an outsider? That Muslims are most vulnerable to Shaytan at the time when their *iman* (faith) is supposed to be at the highest level? That they are most attentive to the female charm at the time when they are supposed to be concentrating on their prayers or listening to Islamic lectures? It's as if the mosque is the only place where their piety is under pressure!

We live in a society where most of the time we have co-ed environments and we don't feel threatened in the presence of NON-MUSLIM people of the opposite gender. I would hate to believe that it may be risky for our *iman* to be in the company of Muslim brothers or sisters (who are by far more modest) and yet go to study or shopping or to work with non-Muslim men or women and THAT is safe for us.

What does it prove? Does it mean that Muslims do not know how to **behave** in the presence of Muslims of the opposite sex? Or that they do not have any **strength** in their character? And the only solution to their weakness is that they must be totally segregated? If this is the case, then we need some training in interpersonal relations between Muslim genders.

Allah says in the Qur'an (interpreted): "*Tell the believing men to reduce some of their vision (i.e., lower their gaze) and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do. And tell the believing women to reduce some of their vision and guard their private parts and not display their adornment except that which [ordinarily] appears thereof and to draw their headcovers over their chests ... And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment*" (24:30-31).

Nowhere does it say that you should stay behind walls and not see or talk to each other. Allah tells us to practice piety. What it means is that we should have *taqwa* or God-consciousness all the time, even if we are surrounded by temptations and *not only in the absence of them*, since it will not serve the purpose. If people cannot practice *taqwa* within an Islamic environment, how could they practice it in the middle of a non-Muslim environment?

As for genders, there was no segregation during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) or the *sahabah* (his companions). Just two examples from history will prove my point: Remember the story during the time of Caliph 'Umar (ra) when people were arguing about the amount of *mahr*, trying to fix it to a certain sum of money, and a woman got up and presented the verse from the Qur'an saying, "*And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously*" (4:4), thus settling the argument? A second example, again during 'Umar's time, is when a woman got up and questioned him about the length of his shirt. As the story goes, Muslims had gotten a lot of fine fabric as the spoil of war. The fabric was equally distributed among the warriors and was just enough to make a short shirt. Since 'Umar (ra) was a tall man and was wearing a long shirt made of that material, the woman questioned as to how he was able to make his shirt with that amount of cloth. 'Umar's son answered the woman that he had given *his* share to his father, and hence the woman was satisfied. Note that both incidences took place *in the mosque and in the presence of both genders*.

Strict segregation may be okay in our home countries, but in a place like Canada, it is not practical. A few reasons are:

- Over 95% of Muslim children attend co-educational schools. They must be taught the proper way of dealing with the opposite sex and should get hands-on training in this area in an Islamic environment. What place, for this purpose, is better than a mosque?

- People looking for a spouse (strictly-arranged marriages are a thing of the past) would be better off finding someone at an Islamic event than at a supermarket. At least they will know that the person has an Islamic background and is worth looking into.

- Statistics show that in North America, women are coming into Islam in large numbers. The mosque is the only place for them to learn, make friends, and find spouses. They are not used to this unnecessary segregation and it is very discouraging for them to feel unwelcome in a mosque. In many events, the hostile atmosphere has driven them back to their own culture.

Strict segregation is superficial. There is no proof from the Qur'an for this practice. What we need is Islamic education and training on dealing with the opposite sex and showing self-restraint. We cannot be successful until we put our knowledge to the test.

Asma Warsi

## Our Mail

### Public Schools vs. Private Islamic Schools

Many people question the advantages and disadvantages of private schools over public schools. In my own life, having attended both types of schools, I have personally observed the discrepancy between public and private education.

That gap which one misses out in public school, especially in the middle and high school years, makes a huge impact on students, whereas an Islamic private school fills this gap.

Students my age automatically assume that it is an awful thing to be

in private school. "It's like prison," they say, "and everyone is isolated from the rest of the world."

In my opinion, this is a wrong conception. Students my age in public schools tend to adapt to kids their age, especially because of peer pressure. I do not blame them. They want to fit in, but as Muslims fitting in with the crowd means we will have to compromise our unique culture and way of life or at least how our attitudes are presented.

Muslim adolescents experience tough times living in North American society and possess, like all other adolescents, a desire to becoming like those around them.

I have been attending Razi Islamic School in Queens, New York for the

## Let Us Talk and Discuss

by Sayed Murtaza Kazim  
Part II of a two-part series

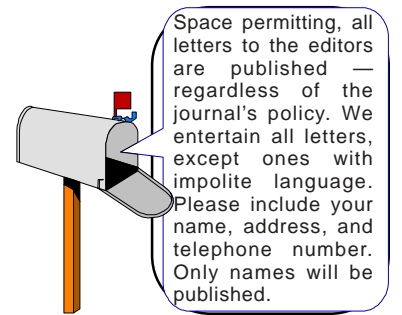
The **sixth** step is *contentment*. Let us understand the comprehensive and humane meanings of contentment, i.e., let us live within our ethical, intellectual, and financial means. In addition, it is obvious, we should continuously strive for the betterment of our entire family. We should perform every act with the intention of being *near* to Allah. Therefore, we will be away from any sin. We should objectively *plan* and continuously *work* hard for the progress and safety of our dear family unit. We should mobilize our common efforts and supplement our individual talents for the achievement of this purpose. We should efficiently stabilize our available means by best *managing* our *time* factor. We should economically spend our money and intelligently utilize our talents. It is how we, the parents, should *manage* our resources within the time span.

The **seventh** step is *motivation*. We should *motivate* and persuade our children towards their future tasks. We should give them an ethical home training. By achieving such home training, they will learn the concept of *self-respect*. They will then respect others and others, *in return*, will respect them. Through achieving the desired education by hard work and acumen, they will learn the concept of *self-honour*. They will then honour others' education and achievements and others, *in return*, will honour their education and achievements. Therefore, they will learn and understand as to what is the *highest* level of respecting others. Their demeanour will then become so sound that they will actually start respecting teachers, spiritual leaders, community servers, friends, relatives, elders, and parents in the correct sense of the word. Each child shall, therefore, develop home as a dynamic unit. This is taught to us by our *Deen*.

The **eighth** step is *teamwork*. Parents should include every child as the member of the familial team. Parents should be helped by the children to accomplish home tasks in time. Parents feel comforted, when children help them. Parents do not need to ask them for their help and support daily. Children should also help one another in accomplishing their normal or extraordinary jobs. Parents feel highly satisfied when children cooperate with one another and continue to adopt the same with zeal. Rather, each child should take care of the other, remind the other as to what task he or she has to perform, and when he or she has to finish the same. Moreover, each child should know how the other child would be helped to boost his or her confidence. This should be the thinking of each child. Each child should be a *team player*.

The **ninth** step is to *listen* to our dear children, *understand* their views and their approach to their lives, and *realise* as to what their issues are. They are our life, blood, and future backbone. We have to rely upon them. We have to listen, understand, and solve their problems and then we have to teach our *belief, values, and norms* to them. They should understand that our *religious* belief is most important. It strengthens our home mission statement and familial unity. It persuades our children to achieve the right education, be successful in their domestic and social lives, and be professional in performing their official tasks. Our children should be clean and healthy. They should be polite in their conversations. They should know their oral and written verdicts, before they so utter. They should be dedicated to the *community*. They should understand the importance of our religious centres. They should learn to socialise in our religious, social, and literary gatherings.

Our children should pragmatically understand such questions as,



letters@theambition.com

past five years and previously attended public school. I loved public school because everyone was free, but looking back now, I realise that, at least partially, I was not free because I wanted to become like the students surrounding me and by doing that it would initially lead me to violate the Islamic regulations. In addition, my parents did not want to take the chance for me to remain in public school and lose my Islamic identity, therefore they sent me to Razi School.

I can relate to everyone at this school, and as a young Muslim girl, I do not have to hesitate before speaking up about Islam. Islamic school has a very clean social environment and I urge all Muslim youths reading this to not only appreciate that you are Muslims but, most importantly, do not forget who you are and how you should behave as a Muslim. If you get the opportunity to attend a private Islamic school, I highly recommend that you avail yourself of this opportunity.

Marwa Elhassa

[Marwa Elhassa is in the eleventh grade at Razi Islamic School in Queens, New York. She can be reached at roobee17@aol.com]

"What are the areas we *lack* in? What training and decorum, *through our parents*; what education and ethics, *through our teachers*; and what religious knowledge and Qur'an teachings, *through our spiritual leaders*; should we receive to *overcome* such lacking areas to excel our future? What timetable should we set out to achieve our goals? Which skilled occupation should we *adopt*? How can we be the responsible citizens to *strengthen* our religion, family, community, and country?"

The **tenth** step is *planning* for future generations. We should, through our diverse and open discussions with our religious and community leaders, plan for the betterment of our future generations. This is what, our Holy Prophet (pbuh) worked for and it is what Allah *expects* from us. Therefore, we should train our children to be the better, outgoing, and mature fellow citizens in every walk of their future lives. As *mature* and *sensible* mother and father, we, the parents, should discuss such future tasks with our children. Our children and we should seek feasible planning and work out the so-

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### Five Good Reasons to Advertise in The Ambition

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## Muslim Role Models

The Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is referred to in the Holy Qur'an as *haneef* — a powerful term, which denotes a person who is inclined to have the right opinion, is firm in devotion, sound, well balanced, and above all true. Thus, the Qur'an clearly holds Ibrahim (peace be upon him) in the highest esteem and regards his role as a Messenger of Allah (God) as immensely and unequivocally integral and consequently central to the mission of Islam. Such sentiments are not unwarranted, as this image of Ibrahim (pbuh) becomes vividly apparent, upon careful analysis of the various contexts in which he is so extensively mentioned in the Qur'an.

For his association with vehemently shunning idol worshippers, an unwavering commitment to self sacrifice, the construction of the Ka'bah and his relation to certain *hajj* (pilgrimage) rituals which predominate today, combined with the great reverence of his family and prophetic progeny, are clearly illustrative lessons of his numerous distinctive attributes and qualities, which all believing men and women should possess. Thus, all of this undeniably reinforces Prophet Ibrahim's noble image as an astounding manifestation of the prototype Muslim and inevitably secures his pre-eminent place in Islam. Islam is a strictly monotheistic

religion. In order to become a Muslim, one must firmly believe and proclaim that "there is no God, but Allah (the One)." Furthermore, the gravest and unforgivable sin in Islam is *shirk* (associating partners with God), as the Qur'an states: "Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin" (4:48). Therefore, in this light, Ibrahim's mere connection with the duty of warning an idolatrous population is reflective of his importance. Furthermore, an analysis of the detailed accounts of his arduous argumentation with such a people gives us invaluable insight into some of his enduring traits.

Growing up in Ur of Chaldea, a pagan society, Ibrahim (pbuh) was undoubtedly exposed to idolatrous practices. Yet, from the very beginning he is shown to possess a deep yearning to search for the truth, despite being bombarded by the polytheistic views, which surrounded

him. Due to having an inquisitive mind, he pondered over the beliefs of his people.

"So when the night covered him [with darkness], he saw a star. He said, 'This is my lord.' But when it set, he said, 'I like not those that set (i.e., disappear).' And when he saw the Moon rising, he said, 'This is my lord.' But when it set, he said, 'Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray.' And when he saw the Sun rising, he said, 'This is my lord; this is greater.' But when it set, he said, 'O my people, indeed I am free what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face (i.e., self) toward He who created the Heavens and the Earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah'" (6:76-79). This brought him to a realisation of how erroneous his ancestral beliefs truly were and so he said, "Indeed, I am [about to be] ill" (37:89), for even considering such ridiculous notions.

Armed with such enlightenment, he was determined to never associate partners with Allah. These convictions transformed him into a staunch preacher of monotheism and Islam. Yet, due to propagating such a message, he encountered fierce opposition from the community, especially his own father, Azar. The following is an excerpt from their conversation:

"[Mention] when he said to his father, 'O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear and does not see and will not benefit you at all? O my father, indeed there has come to me of knowledge that which has not come to you, so follow me; I will guide you to an even path. O my father, do not worship (i.e., obey) Satan. Indeed Satan has ever been, to the Most Merciful, disobedient. O my father, indeed I fear that there will touch you

a punishment from the Most Merciful so you would be to Satan a companion [in Hellfire].' [His father] said, 'Have you no desire for my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist, I will surely stone you, so avoid me a prolonged time.' [Ibrahim] said, 'Peace (i.e., safety) will be upon you. I will ask forgiveness for you of my Lord. Indeed, He is ever gracious to me. And I will leave you and those you invoke other than Allah and will invoke my Lord. I expect that I will not be in invocation to my Lord unhappy (i.e., disappointed)'" (19:42-48).

An analysis of these verses reveals that Ibrahim (pbuh) was patient in relaying the message of *tawheed* (God's unity) to his father. Even though Prophet Ibrahim was in the right, he never disrespected his father, either by raising his voice or insulting him in any way, despite Azar's erring ways, which worried Ibrahim (pbuh) tremendously. This sincere concern of a righteous son was met only by the harsh and derogatory tone of Azar, the pagan whose stubbornness borne out of ignorance literally blinded him and led him to ultimately threaten his own offspring with death or banishment. Such contrasting reactions are quite poignant.

So, despite experiencing such a cruel response, Ibrahim, the Muslim, remained gracious and only invoked salutations of peace on his father, hoping that Allah would have mercy on his soul. Regardless of the immense affection he held for his father, his love for Allah and belief in the truth outweighed his familial attachments. He firmly understood that regardless of whoever the opposition may be, one must never compromise on what is right nor clothe truth with falsehood.

In lieu of this, Ibrahim (pbuh) continued preaching the message of Islam and its abomination of idolaters, which ultimately caused him to confront the entire community. The biting dialogue occurred as follows:

"He said, 'Do they hear you when you supplicate? Or do they benefit you, or do they harm?' They said, 'But we found our fathers doing thus.' He said, 'Then do you see what you have been worshipping, you and your ancient forefathers? Indeed, they are enemies to me, except the Lord of the worlds, who created me, and He [it is who] guides me. And it is He who feeds me and gives me drink. And when I am ill, it is He who cures me and who will cause me to die and then bring me to life and who I aspire that He will forgive my sin on the Day of Recompense'" (26:72-82).

Here we are exposed to another aspect of Ibrahim's personality and his example as a role model for Muslims. In arguing with the pagans, Ibrahim (pbuh) utilised an articulate and intelligent approach in order to appeal to the intellect of the idolatrous people. For him there was a clear distinction

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## A Qur'anic Analysis of Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh), the Haneef

By Ahmed Mian  
First of a two-part story

### From the Qur'an

*Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire — of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return (i.e., Paradise). Qur'an 3:14*

### From the Hadith

*Narrated Abdullah: "The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Who among you considers the wealth of his heirs dearer to him than his own wealth?" They replied, "O Allah's Messenger! There is non among us but loves his own wealth more." The prophet (pbuh) said, "So his wealth is whatever he spends (in Allah's Cause) during his life (on good deeds) while the wealth of his heirs is whatever he leaves after his death." (Bukhari)*

*The Ambition* is published bimonthly, with a circulation of five thousand copies. It is a free, non-profit publication and does not have the financial support of any group or organisation, foreign or domestic. It is mainly supported by Muslim businesses and individuals.

All submissions are subject to editing for the purpose of clarity or space.

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7224 Harwick Drive  
Mississauga, ON L4T 3A4  
Tel & Fax: (905) 673-2181  
editors@theambition.com  
www.theambition.com

ISSN 1496-3175 (Print)  
ISSN 1496-3183 (Online)

Professor Syed Aley Ahmad Abdi, Former Principal, Government Education College, Multan, Pakistan

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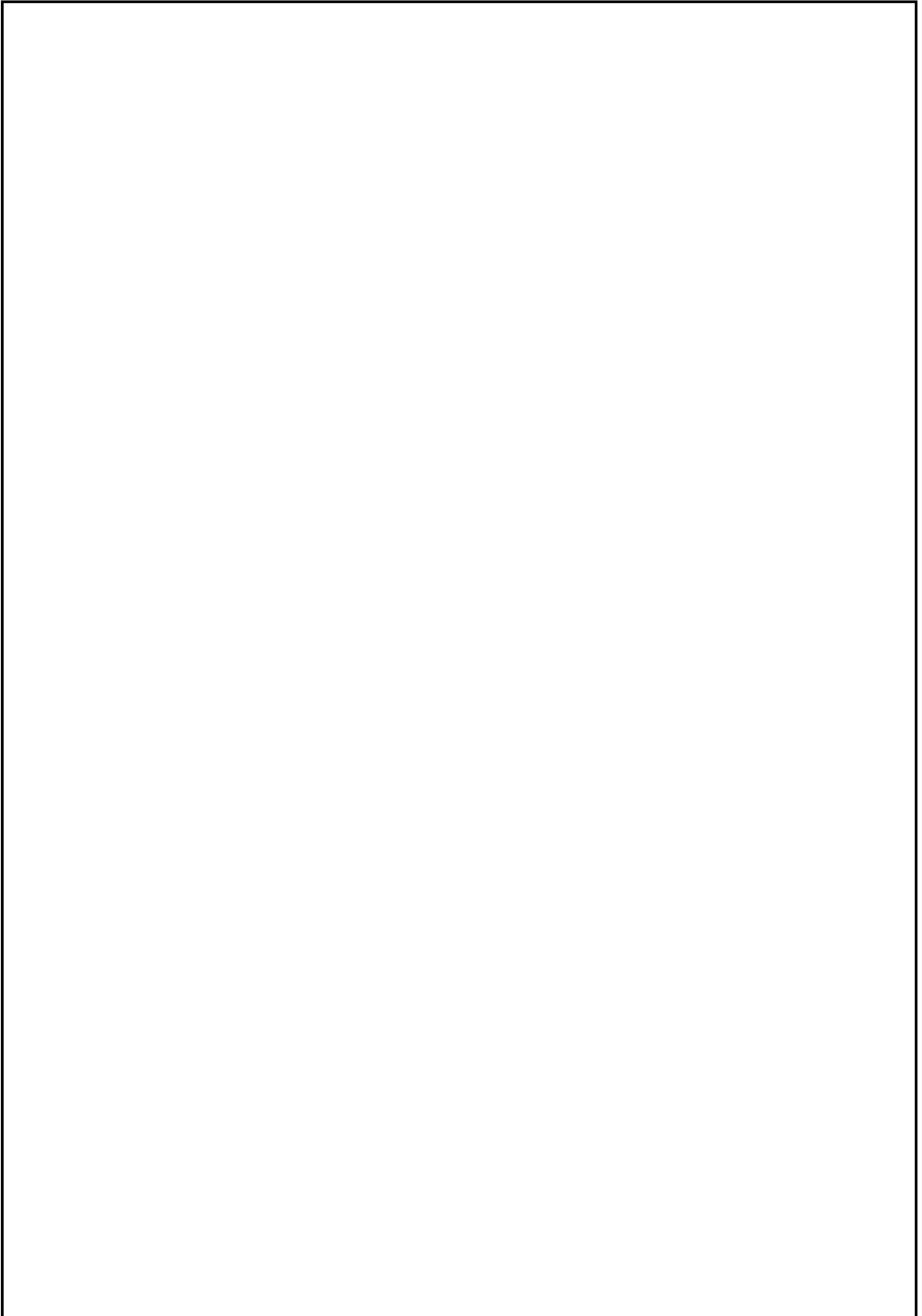
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# Let's Talk

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lutions. Therefore, *let us speak. Let us talk.* Let us not be timid. Let us not be silent. Effective mobilization of planning for the betterment of our future generations should continuously be evaluated through home and community discussions and by engaging in suitable and meaningful community programs and gatherings.

Our children are the strong link to our future generations. They are our love and our lives. We cannot be happy without their success. We want to see you successful within the boundary lines of our *religion*. We depended upon our parents yesterday. You will be the very pillars of the community tomorrow. Our ances-

tors were the people of high morals, incredible wisdom, and extraordinary repute. We depend upon you today. So, do not worry. You are not alone! Tell us, what you feel. Let us discuss with you, what you feel within. Let us and you *share* the facts of life together and, thus, let us *sort out* your worries.

Each one of you is an individual person. We, the parents, have been treating each one of you as an individual. We have been sharing your talents, potentials, and intelligence. We understand that each child, as a person, is different and unique from the other, though he or she belongs to the same family. Each one of them has different thinking and has different approach to the life. We realize the same. When they have any worry or anxiety, we can read it by seeing

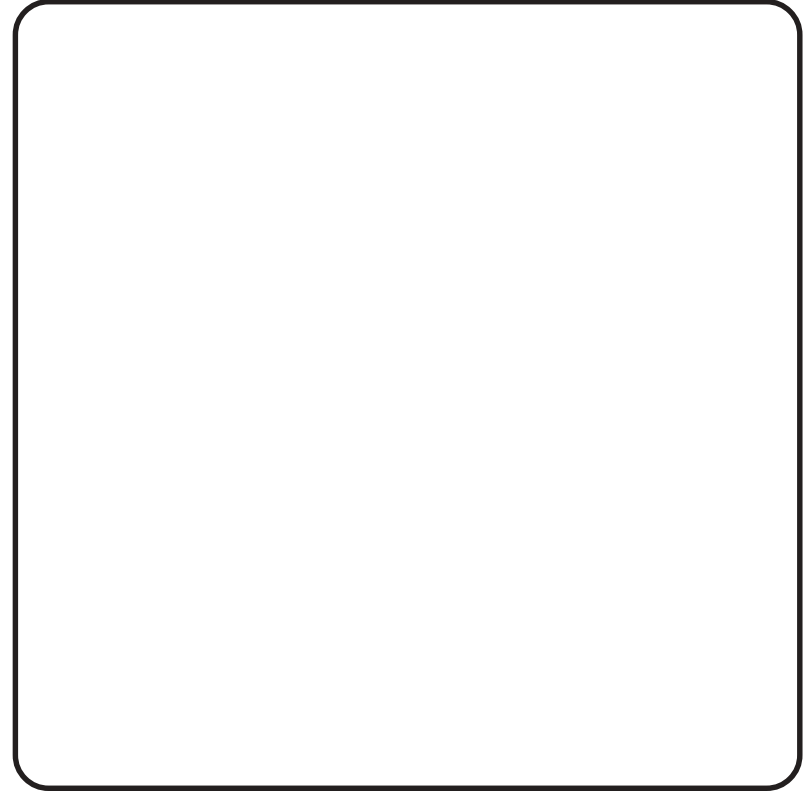
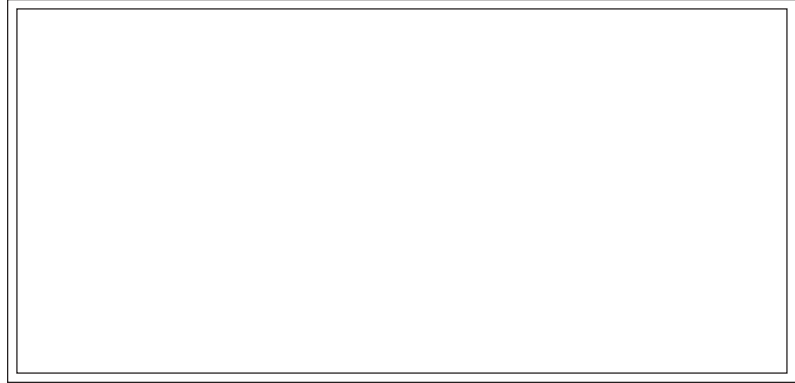
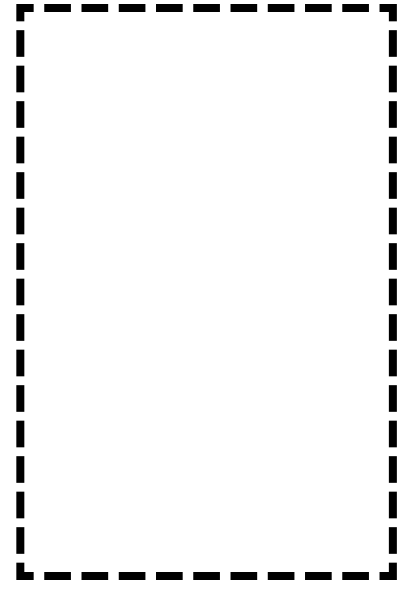
their very faces. Therefore, we want to discuss their worries or anxieties with you. That is why we discuss all such and other topics with them on weekends *in particular*; or when we eat, drink, and sit together, or when we are on long drives *in general*. We like to discuss every topic and problem with them. They may be the religious and ethical issues, or informative and academic subjects, or social and domestic concerns, or general and current topics.

We, as parents, should discuss the weaknesses of each child in a *cool* and *constructive* way. Such weaknesses can be overcome in a positive manner. If the situation calls for, we should listen and talk to the concerned child *separately*. Let us know how our children desire to solve their own concerns. Our opinions will

help them to find better solutions. Thus, weaknesses can be turned to their strengths. *We should not forget* that we were kids yesterday. Whether we believe that or not and recall that or not, we had weaknesses and our parents *did address* them. *So, why should not we solve our kids' problems without injuring their confidence, integrity, and personality?* We should involve our children in such a way that they should *always* stay at home with us. When we go out, we should *always* accompany them with us. *That's right!*

Allah has expressed His words very explicitly for the betterment of entire humanity. *United we stand and divided we fall!* We seek to be united within our homes and cooperate with others, too, to maintain

peace, cooperation, and dignity around the world over. Ameen!



## A new community service

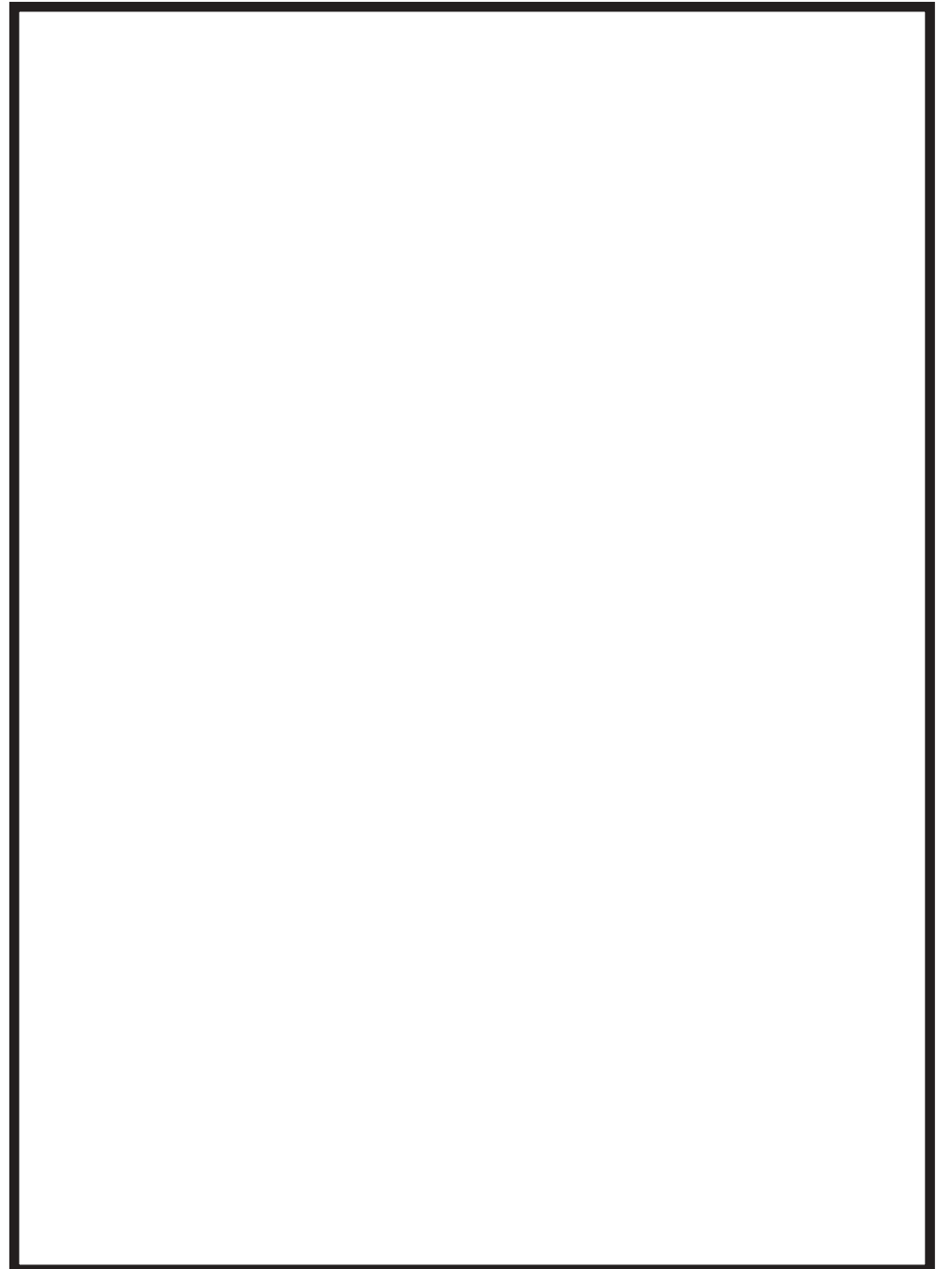
A community service is being offered for the Greater Toronto Area. An all-purpose community phone line with information on community resources, mosques, current events, *halaqas*, jobs, and more, Insha-Allah.

It is in the testing phase. There are still some technical bugs. We would appreciate your comments very much.

The telephone number is 416-3-MUSLIM (416-368-7546).

Please press 2 to leave your comments or events, or e-mail them to [threemuslim@yahoo.com](mailto:threemuslim@yahoo.com). Please make *du'a* that the service is of benefit to the Muslim community.

Jazak-Allahu-Khayrun,  
*Dr. Arif Syed,*  
*Br. Osama Syed,*  
*Br. Ibrahim Danial*



## Middle East in Focus

# Facts Surrounding the Middle East Conflict

1. Did you know that non-Jewish Israelis cannot buy or lease land in Israel? A Jew from any country in the world is guaranteed citizenship in Israel, while the Palestinians who have been there for centuries are oppressed and persecuted.

2. Did you know that instead of sewing an insignia on clothing to distinguish race, Palestinian automobile license plates in Israel are colour-coded to distinguish Jews from non-Jews?

3. Did you know that East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights are all considered by the entire world community, including the United States of America (USA) and the United Nations (UN), to be occupied territory and NOT part of Israel?

4. Did you know that Israel allocates 85% of its water resources for Jews and the remaining 15% is divided among all Palestinians in the Occupied Territories? For example, in Hebron, 85% of the water is set aside for about 400 Jewish settlers, while the remaining 15% is distributed among Hebron's 120,000 Palestinians.

5. Did you know that the USA awards Israel \$5 billion in aid each year from American tax dollars?

6. Did you know that American aid to Israel (\$1.8 billion annually in military aid alone) exceeds the aid that the USA grants to the entire African continent? This aid is used both to buy American weaponry and to buy arms made in Israel.

7. Did you know that Israel is awaiting an additional \$4 billion worth of American military hardware, including new F-16's, and Apache and Blackhawk helicopters? As Israel's main ally and supporter internationally, the USA is committed to maintaining the Jewish state's "qualitative edge" in weapons over its neighbours.

8. Did you know that the American administration has notified Congress on numerous occasions that Israel has violated the rules on how American-supplied weapons are used? (In 1978, 1979, and 1982, during fighting in Lebanon and once after Israel's bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981.)

9. Did you know that Israel is the only country in the Middle East that refuses to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and bars international inspections from its sites?

10. Did you know that high-ranking military officers in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) have admitted publicly that unarmed prisoners of war have been summarily executed by the Israeli forces?

11. Did you know that Israel blew up an American diplomatic facility in Egypt and attacked an American warship in international waters (the USS Liberty), killing 33 and wounding 177 American sailors and the USA did nothing about it? (Imagine if a Muslim country did this!)

12. Did you know that Israel stands in defiance of 69 UN Security Council Resolutions?

13. Did you know that Israel is explicitly dedicated to the policy of maintaining a distinct Jewish character?

14. Did you know that Israel's current Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, was found by an Israeli court to be "personally and directly responsible" for the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon, where more than 2,000 innocent Palestinian men, women, and children were axed to death or lined up and shot in cold blood?

15. Did you know that on May 20, 1990, a group of unarmed Palestinian labourers were lined up and murdered by an Israeli soldier as they sat waiting for transportation back to Gaza? The terrified labourers who gathered in an area of southern Israel known as Rishon Lezion (known to Palestinians by its Arabic name Oyon Qara) handed their ID cards to the Israeli soldier. The soldiers ordered the distressed labourers to kneel down and face the ground and unexpectedly showered them with a barrage of bullets, killing seven, and wounding many others. It is needless to say, the soldier was not charged with any crime.

16. Did you know that until as recently as 1988, Israelis were permitted to run "Jews Only" employment ads?

17. Did you know that the Israeli Foreign Ministry pays six American public relations firms to promote a

"positive image" of Israel to the American public?

18. Did you know that Sharon's coalition government includes a party (Molodet) that advocates ethnic cleansing by openly calling for the forced expulsion of all Palestinians from the Occupied Territories?

19. Did you know that recently declassified documents indicate that David Ben-Gurion approved of the forced expulsion of Arabs from all Palestinian territory in 1948?

20. Did you know that the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, who is also a founder and spiritual leader of the religious Shas party (Israel's third largest political party) openly advocates a "Final Solution" to annihilate the Palestinians? Speaking at the widely broadcast sermon marking the last Passover, he declared about the Palestinians: "The Lord shall return their deeds on their own heads, waste their seed and exterminate them, devastate them and vanish them from this world. It is forbidden to be merciful to them. You must send missiles to them and annihilate them. They are evil and damnable."

21. Did you know that Palestinian refugees make up the largest portion of the refugee population in the world?

22. Did you know that Palestinian Christians are considered the "living stones" of Christianity because they are the direct descendants of the disciples of Jesus Christ? In addition, the Palestinian Christians stand united with their Muslim brethren in the struggle against the Israeli occupation.

23. Did you know that despite a ban on torture by Israel's High Court of Justice, torture has continued unabated by Shin Bet interrogators on Palestinian prisoners?

24. Did you know that despite every Israeli attempt to disrupt Palestinian education, Palestinians have the highest ratio of Ph.D.'s per capita in the world?

25. Did you know that the right of self-determination is guaranteed to every human being under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 1948), yet, Palestinians were expected to negotiate for this

right under the Oslo Accords?

26. Did you know that despite what is widely perpetuated and written in history books that the Arabs attacked Israel in the 1967 war, it was Israel who attacked the Arab countries first, capturing Jerusalem and the West Bank, and called the attack a pre-emptive strike?

27. Did you know that, as an occupying power, Israel has a particular responsibility under the Geneva Convention to protect Palestinian civilians?

28. Did you know that despite Ariel Sharon's public call for a unilateral ceasefire, Israeli soldiers have

not stopped shooting, killing, or bulldozing Palestinian homes? The most recent example of this was the murder of three innocent women who were shot by an Israeli tank as they sat in their tent!

29. Did you know that the Zionists have been trying to destroy Masjid al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock for the last fifty years by digging underground tunnels beneath the sites to weaken their foundations, causing them to collapse?

30. Did you know that the majority of Muslims have been sleeping for the past fifty years and have been unaware of most of the above facts?

## What Can You Do For Palestine?

by *Yahya Abdul Rahman*

Many of us living here in the West are genuinely concerned over the current situation in Palestine. We feel a sense of frustration that either not enough is being done to help our brothers and sisters there, or that we are powerless to do anything. The result is that we become filled with despair. Failure to do anything at all, however, will not help our suffering brothers and sisters.

I would like here to offer a few humble suggestions of what every individual can do for the cause of Palestine.

To begin, we should NOT concern ourselves with what we cannot do as that is a moot point. We must concentrate on what we CAN do and proceed from there. So here is what we CAN DO:

1. Make *du'a* (supplication to Allah) for your brothers and sisters in Palestine.

2. Support those groups who are defending Palestine here in the West with your prayers, time, and wealth. They cannot do their important work without your support.

3. Send charity to the needy through trusted charitable organisations.

4. Educate yourself on the issues. There are many websites and

books that can help you with this (for example, see [www.iap.org](http://www.iap.org) and [www.mediamonitors.net](http://www.mediamonitors.net)).

5. Educate others. They do not know because you did not tell them. So, get out there and let others know.

6. Monitor the media on a daily basis and detect bias. When you see bias, write a letter to the editor and complain. Refuse to remain silent.

7. Place pressure on your elected officials to stop supporting Israel.

All these efforts may seem small by themselves, but if each and everyone of us were to take the time to make them a part of our daily lives then, with the help of Allah, we would see a great change come about.

In conclusion, as Muslims, we believe that it is Allah who determines the outcome of our actions, and it is our duty to strive the best we can with the abilities we have been given. Despair should never be in the vocabulary of a believing Muslim, but we must have confidence that Allah is on our side and that He will help us.

*Yahya Abdul Rahman lives in Montréal and is the editor of the online Islamic News and Information Network ([www.inin.net](http://www.inin.net)).*

*New Islamic TV Program*  
**LET THE QUR'AN SPEAK**  
 Hosted by *Shabir Ally*  
 Canada-wide on *VISION TV*  
 Saturday nights at 12:30  
[www.quranspeaks.com](http://www.quranspeaks.com)

## Middle East in Focus

### IAP Launches Project "Reaching Out"

CHICAGO (30/6/2001)—The Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), a national grassroots organisation established in 1981 and dedicated to advancing a just solution for the Palestinian people, announced a new project today entitled "Reaching Out." The purpose of this initiative is to reach out to the Muslim community here in North America with the goal of including more people in IAP activities.

"We are looking for volunteers of all ages, genders, and backgrounds here in North America and are inviting them to join our efforts," stated IAP President Rafeeq Jaber while commenting on this program.

"We are especially encouraging non-Arabs and non-Palestinians to come forward and get involved in the work of Palestine," he continued.

The IAP is looking for volunteers to act as representatives and local contacts in their respective localities and community centres or mosques and eventually establishing an IAP branch in their area.

"We are well aware of the fact that it is not just Palestinians who have a deep concern and passion for the cause of Palestine," said IAP Chairman Dr. Sabri Samirah. "This was most evident during the first few weeks of the Al-Aqsa Intifada when people from every background took to the streets in mass demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people," he further stated.

Dr. Samirah further emphasized the need for activists who are first- and second-generation Americans.

"The younger generation are our future, and we are counting on them to carry on the work for Palestine," said Dr. Samirah.

"We are confident that if we provide our young people with the opportunity and tools, they will be even more effective than we are in promoting the cause of Palestine to our elected officials and the general American public," he further stated.

Some of the duties of the IAP representatives would be to act as liaisons between the IAP headquarters

### Middle East Youth Crisis: A Source of Global Instability?

By Faisal Kutty

While Europe has become increasingly concerned about a graying population, the Middle East has had the exact opposite concern. In fact, with a population projected by the Population Reference Bureau to grow from 265 million to 575 million in about 30 years, the Middle East will need to undergo major transformations if it is to keep up with this expansion. The components return home after getting foreign degrees, don't have a lot to look forward to either.

Urbanization without development, proper infrastructure or planning, and housing shortages is compounding the demographic problem. The percent of urbanization in the total population rose from 37% in 1970 to 57% in 1996. Approximately 30 years ago, that ratio stood at 40:60; but by the year 2020, that ratio is expected to be 70:30 (Mary E. Morris, The Post-Peace Agenda for the Middle East: Coping with Demographic Stresses). Fueled by natural increase as well as migration, the drastic urban-rural population ratio shift is clearly visible. As a result of this shift the governments of urban centers such as Gaza, Istanbul, Cairo, Algiers, Tehran, Amman, Damascus and Sana'a have already become unable to meet the basic needs of their residents.

According to a 1998 report put out by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Strategic and International

and their respective communities, organize local activities to bring attention to the Palestinian cause, establish solid working relationships with other local organisations who are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, and monitor and respond back to anti-Palestinian media bias.

Those who are interested in taking part in this initiative can contact IAP via the Internet at [iapinfo@iap.org](mailto:iapinfo@iap.org). Visit the IAP website at [www.iap.org](http://www.iap.org).

Studies, Middle East gross national product (GNP) grew at the rate of 1.1 percent annually from 1965 to 1996. This compares to increases of 7.4 percent in East Asia and the Pacific, 3.3 percent in Latin America, 4.6 percent in South Asia and 2.7 percent for Sub-Saharan Africa. The report — titled Demographics and the Coming Youth Explosion in the Gulf — also calculated the youth unemployment rate to be almost 30 percent.

All these statistics paint a fairly bleak picture and growing labor forces, stagnating economies and urban centers bursting at the seams provide the perfect breeding ground for unrest. Lack of employment in particular leaves many able bodies idle. When left idle for long enough, these individuals can become easily coopted by opposition groups that preach attractive messages of social justice, reform and equality. These messages can also include calls for action which, in places such as the Gaza and West Bank, Egypt and Algeria, have triggered radical and revolutionary change. The direction of future change will depend on how various governments respond to the challenges they face.

Deprived and radicalized youth can only become a source of regional and even global instability. In the global village, unless governments provide the opportunity for the restless youth to channel their energies and interests toward the betterment of their nations as a whole, the Middle East pressure cooker could explode into a cycle of turmoil. Therefore dialogue and participatory political systems must replace repression and political corruption. The Western democracies must wake up from their complacency and do their part to encourage the empowerment of the masses in charting their future — before the impending Middle East demographic powder keg explodes.

Faisal Kutty is a Toronto-based lawyer and writer. He is also a columnist for [iViews.com](http://iViews.com) and The Washington Report on Middle East.

## Helpful Hints

By Sister Shireen Patel

**Q:** My friends keep asking me if I want to go clubbing, I know it's wrong but I really want to go, at least to see what it's all about. What should I do?

**A:** Loud music, colourful lights, half naked people dancing, alcohol, and perhaps drugs ... that's what it is. Just like you see on TV, nothing new. The description above, being that of a club, has NO benefit for you as a Muslim, or a person with morals and principles. If you don't want to go to a club for the purpose of clubbing, then it would be because you want to have "fun" with your "friends," or just spend time with them and "not do anything wrong." But the thing is, if you weren't to do anything wrong, you'd have to go blindfolded and have earplugs on, to avoid committing a sin. You will be accountable for your every action, and no person in this world is worth sinning for. My suggestion is to find friends that don't pressure you, or for you to at least tell them to never ask you if you want to go, so as to not tempt you. Islam is a way of life, it's perfect in all forms, but people wrong themselves. Don't wrong yourself, especially not for cheap thrills, or the "experience." Be proud of being a Muslim, and don't ever feel you're missing out. The only thing you'd miss is everlasting bliss in the Hereafter, but before that, it's all a test to get there. Stay strong, and be confident in what YOU believe. Don't ever compromise your standards for anyone, especially when you KNOW it's wrong. May the Almighty make your journey to Paradise easy. Ameen.

**Q:** I recently started wearing Hijab, and I'm the only Hijabi in my school. Only a few people have asked me why I wear it, but it seems the rest of the school just always keeps staring at me. How do I get them to stop?

**A:** Hijab is a great thing sister, but many people do not understand that. So, when they "stare," it's only out of ignorance. Just like if you go to someone's house and they serve you a dish that you've never seen or heard of before. It looks different, not something you're used to, so you sort of stare at it for a bit to see what exactly it is. Then you try it, and you're like, "Wow, that's so good!" That's like Hijab; people will look because they're trying to figure out what it's all about, why someone would do that when they don't have to, etc. It's so foreign to them, that they don't know how to approach you. One way of educating others in your school about Hijab would be by approaching your teacher for each class and asking for five minutes to briefly talk about Hijab. Many people are scared that they would offend you if they ask; little do they know that you'd be delighted if they asked why you wear it. When you stand before your classmates in all your classes to educate them, word will get around through teachers and students (trust me). They'll share the knowledge with each other, and those that are still sort of confused may come up to you and ask. Be friendly with everyone, even if at first they appear "mean," and don't be discouraged. You'll see, Insha-Allah, by the time you leave, many if not all of those stares will be smiles from the great admiration and respect they have for you. May the Almighty reward you for your efforts in His cause and help you to teach others about Islam. Ameen.

**Q:** My parents keep nagging me to do stuff, and it's driving me up the wall. Sometimes I get really angry and yell. I don't mean to, but it just happens. I feel really bad afterwards, but I don't say anything to them. Please help!

**A:** A parent has nothing but love for their child, yet a "child" being immature and lacking wisdom fails to comprehend that. Your mother or father may tell you once, twice, or a billion times and as annoying as that can be it's your duty to bite your tongue and take it. Why? Because they are your parents, and in Islam they are held in a very high position. The second most loved thing by Allah is obedience to one's parents. We will all slip up, and when we do, we MUST apologise for our error. As they say, "Anger is one letter short of danger," so try to control yourself. If you feel you are getting mad, politely excuse yourself and take a "time-out." Perhaps your parents don't understand that their telling you over and over has such an effect on you. They may just think they raised a rude child or something. Go to them and explain how you feel, but do it with patience, and try to understand their point of view. One day, Insha-Allah, you'll also be a parent. Imagine if your intention was nothing but good, and your child blew up in your face, and yelled at you. What would you think? How would you feel? I'm sure most of the time you're probably well deserving of having to hear them tell you over and over. If you just do it the first time, they can't say anything after that. In life, you have to learn that every relationship needs sacrifice, understanding, and effective communication. If you don't have that, then you don't have a good relationship. Try to implement those things in your relationship with your parents. Talk to them! When you're feeling it's becoming difficult to be understanding and make that sacrifice, then just try and keep reminding yourself how important your parents are and how much they love you. Regardless of how emotionally strong parents are, we must not forget that they do also have feelings. Whenever there's a will, there's a way, so make a sincere effort to change your ways and don't give up. May the Almighty grant you patience and understanding to overcome this obstacle. Ameen.

Do you need some advice? E-mail your questions to [advice@theambition.com](mailto:advice@theambition.com)

## Newsroom

### Muslim Canadians Delighted To See Olajuwon Join Raptors

TORONTO (5/8/2001) — The Canadian Islamic Congress is welcoming the news that basketball superstar Hakeem Olajuwon will be joining the Toronto Raptors.

"We are extremely delighted," said Professor Mohamed Elmasry, National President of the Congress. "I know first-hand that Brother

Hakeem is an exemplary Muslim. My son and I met him last June in Mecca while performing 'Umrah. We were both very happy to talk with him."

Olajuwon, whose given name of Hakeem means "wise" in Arabic, is known by thousands of his Muslim fans, in Canada and internationally, by his Islamic title of "Brother Hakeem."

"I can testify to his humbleness and modesty. He is an inspiration to youth, Muslim and non-Muslim alike," Elmasry continued. "The fact that he is a good father, a good husband, and a sports superstar who practices his faith makes him an ideal mentor."

"Young people usually look up to their sports heroes and try to emulate them," said Wahida Valiante, a family counsellor who is National Vice-President of the CIC. "When someone like Hakeem Olajuwon plays and lives among them, it has tremendous positive impact."

The staff of *The Ambition* welcomes Brother Hakeem.

### Canada Day Cross-Canada Cycle Trip To Help Child War Victims

On Canada Day, Alan Okanovic set out to begin a marathon bicycle odyssey from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Victoria, British Columbia, to raise funds and awareness for war-deprived children of Iraq, Palestine, and Chechnya.

"As a Bosnian Canadian, it is my turn to help children who need it the most," said the 27-year-old Edmonton resident. "Cycling across Canada to raise money for these children is what I can do best to help."

Okanovic's coast-to-coast trip, organized in conjunction with Human Concern International of Ottawa, began July 1 and will end some three-and-a-half months later, in mid-October.

"Since 1980, we have helped many needy children and are glad to work with Alan on this event," said HCI Chairman, Mumtaz Ahkter, in Ottawa.

"The fact that Mr. Okanovic is cycling more than 8,000 km to help the children of far-away places like Iraq, Palestine, and Chechnya makes every Canadian and every Muslim very proud," said Professor Mohamed Elmasry, National President of the Canadian Islamic Congress, which is co-sponsoring the ride.

"We Canadians live in a country of peace and plenty. To feel the suffering of others and do something about it is a religious duty and humanitarian act of the first order."

CONTACT: Alan Okanovic, 403-616-8006 (cell)

### CAIR-CAN Calls For Investigation Into Prayer Room Raid

OTTAWA (15/7/2001) — The Canadian office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) today filed a formal complaint with the Ottawa Police and called on the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Elinor Kaplan, for an investigation into her department's role in a police raid of Mecca Musallah, a prayer apartment located in Ottawa.

The Muslim Community Council of Ottawa (MCCO), an umbrella organisation representing twenty Ottawa Islamic groups, has filed a similar complaint with the police.

The tactical unit of the Ottawa Police raided the prayer apartment on Wednesday, June 13, 2001, at approximately 11:00 p.m. Worshippers were ordered at gunpoint to raise their hands and line-up in the corridor. They were frisked for weapons, and then interrogated regarding their name, address, immigration status, and the reason for their presence in the prayer apartment.

The tactical unit confirmed that the raid was in response to a "tip"

## Number of American Mosques Grows by 25%

Washington, DC — A national Islamic advocacy group today released a major study of the Muslim community in the United States indicating that the number of mosques grew by 25 percent in the past seven years and that mosques are becoming dynamic centres for social and political mobilization.

That report, called "The Mosque in America: A National Portrait," is the result of in-depth interviews with a randomized sample of representatives drawn from more than 1,200 American mosques. (This figure is not the total number of American mosques. Smaller or new mosques may have been missed. Friday prayers held in places such as businesses and hospitals were not included in the count.)

During a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) outlined some major findings contained in the survey: (To view the entire report, go to [www.cair-net.org](http://www.cair-net.org))

"Mosques are not only centres for spirituality, they are now bases for political and social mobilization,"

that a refugee sought by the Immigration department was seen in the prayer room. During the search of the prayer room, eyewitness accounts relate that a copy of the Qur'an was found thrown on the floor, prayer timetable clocks were altered to indicate incorrect prayer times, and the phone in the prayer apartment was broken. The police did not have a warrant either for the refugee they were pursuing or for their search of the apartment.

CAIR-CAN requested the following:

1. An immediate and thorough investigation into the raid with particular attention to constitutional and human rights violations, as well as issues of professional misconduct.
2. A written apology to the worshippers who were interrogated and to the Muslim community in Ottawa.
3. Creation of a policy brief within the police to ensure such a raid never re-occurs.
4. Establishment of a liaison officer between the police and the Muslim community.
5. Institution of a sensitization program about the practices of the Islamic faith.

The letter asked for clarification on why a community prayer location was targeted; why a tactical unit was utilised; why all the worshippers present were subjected to interrogation; and the relevance and necessity of interviewing the worshippers regarding their immigration status.

Executive Director Riad Saloojee commented that "the raid raises very serious legal and procedural issues. Many of these questions have yet to be answered by both the Ottawa Police and the Immigration Department."

The Ottawa Police has thirty days to communicate how the complaint will be handled and resolved. Should the answer be unsatisfactory, the issue can be appealed to the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, and then, ultimately, Divisional Court.

says CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad.

Awad added that Muslims are having a positive impact on American society. He cited last year's American Muslim voter registration drive and increased turnout by Muslim voters.

"One of the most significant findings in this survey is that mosques are quite ethnically diverse," said Dr. Ihsan Bagby, the report's primary researcher. Bagby noted that 93 percent of all mosques are attended by more than one ethnic group.

• There is tremendous growth both in the number of mosques and in the number of those who take part in mosque activities. On average, there are more than 1,625 Muslims associated in some way with the religious life of each mosque. The average attendance at Friday prayer is 292 worshippers. Some 2 million American Muslims are associated with a mosque.

• Report findings support conservative estimates of a total American Muslim population of 7 million.

• The number of participants has increased at more than 75 percent of mosques during the past five years. Growth is witnessed across the board but suburban mosques have experienced the greatest increases.

• Conversion rates are steady. On average, nearly 30 percent of mosque participants are converts. The average mosque has 16 conversions per year.

• Mosques are relatively young: 30 percent of all mosques were established in the 1990's and 32 percent were founded in the 1980's.

• Four-fifths of mosques are located in a metropolitan area, most often a city neighbourhood.

• At the average mosque, 33 percent of members are of South Asian origin (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.), 30 percent are African-American, and 25 percent are from the Arabic-speaking world.

• Most mosques are involved in some outreach activities. During the past 12 months, a majority of mosques have done each of the following activities: visited a school or church to present Islam, contacted the media, contacted a political leader, and participated in an interfaith dialogue.

• Almost 70 percent of mosques provide some type of assistance for the needy.

• More than 20 percent of mosques have a full-time school.

• More than 90 percent of respondents agree that Muslims should be involved in American institutions and should participate in the political process.

• In general, mosque leadership does not appear to be highly formalized or bureaucratic. At the majority of mosques, the leader is a volunteer, works part-time, and is employed outside the mosque.

• In a majority of mosques, final decision-making authority rests not with the leader but with a Majlis ash-Shura (executive committee or board of directors).

• In most mosques with a board, women are allowed to serve as members.

"The Mosque in America" is the largest and most comprehensive survey of its kind to be conducted in the United States. It is part of a larger study of American congregations called "Faith Communities Today" coordinated by Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religious Research. Muslim organisations sponsoring the report include CAIR, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed, and the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA).

### Washing Hands Five Times A Day Recommended By US Health Centre

by American Journal of Preventive Medicine

Edited and abridged by the Canadian Islamic Congress

(August 2, 2001) — US Navy recruits who were ordered to wash their hands at least five times a day saw a decrease in respiratory illnesses of 45% from the year before, according to a study conducted by the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC).

Respiratory illness is a common cause of lost time from work in the US and "the most common cause of lost time from duty among young adults in the military," the report indicates.

In the study, Operation Stop Cough was implemented at the Great Lakes Recruit Training Command in Illinois, beginning in September 1996.

During the study, about 40,000 recruits were instructed by their commanding officer to wash their hands five times each day. Soap dispensers were installed and recruits were lectured monthly on the importance of handwashing.

Despite the program's success, almost half reported that they did not have time to wash five times a day due to their busy training schedules.

"In most offices, people are not inclined to wash their hands even before eating," Dr. Joel C. Gaydos of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Silver Spring, Maryland, writes in an accompanying editorial. "Re-emphasizing handwashing in our daily lives may provide significant benefits with little effort or cost, especially during the respiratory disease season," he notes.

CIC'S NOTE: For the last 1,400 years, Muslims have been washing their hands five times a day prior to performing their prayers.

### The Ambition's Electronic Newsletter

If you would like to know what's in the latest issue of *The Ambition* and when it's available, please join our electronic mailing list.

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**Voice of a destitute and paraplegic person.**

Please help J. Iqbal, a legal Canadian entrant on a **Minister's permit** who became paraplegic in a car accident. By the Grace of God he survived after long hospitalization. The insurance company has exhausted all the specified fund on his treatment.

**Now he totally depends on the community for help. He does not have any access to the OHIP or assistance until 2003.**

Please generously spare even a dollar for him. May God help you, bless you and reward you in this world and in the Hereafter.

Please make cheque payable to:

**Javed Iqbal**

900 Dufferin St., P.O. Box 24147  
Toronto, Ont. Canada M6H 4H6

You may send it **directly** to his bank account no. 3140340, transit no. 16042-004, TD Bank, 948 St. Clair Ave. W., Toronto, Ont. M6C 1C8

**Maryland Firefighter Wins Right To Islamic Headscarf****Department applauded for first-of-its-kind religious accommodation**

WASHINGTON, DC (12/7/2001) — In a first-of-its-kind case of workplace religious accommodation, a female Muslim firefighter in Maryland will be allowed to wear a religiously-mandated Islamic headscarf while on duty. The decision by Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) to allow the scarf came following discussions with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based Islamic advocacy group.

The Muslim firefighter, a recent convert to Islam and seven-year MCFRS veteran, began wearing the headscarf on the job in June. She was sent home on administrative leave while fire officials evaluated department policy on the issue.

After being contacted by the firefighter, CAIR

worked with MCFRS administrators to assure them that the headscarf would not compromise the safety of either the firefighter or the public she serves. It was then agreed that she would be able to wear a dark blue or white headscarf at all times, and would replace it with a fireproof hood and helmet when required to dress in protective clothing.

"We congratulate Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service for its commitment to religious diversity and thank department administrators for the professional manner in which they dealt with this sensitive issue," said CAIR Civil Rights Coordinator Joshua Salaam.

In June, a federal judge ordered the District of Columbia to reinstate Muslim firefighters who were put on administrative leave because they refused to shave what they believe to be religiously-mandated beards. The judge, who cited the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, said that a fire department grooming policy interfered with their religious freedom.

CAIR publishes a booklet called "An Employer's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices" designed to prevent these types of incidents from occurring. For more information, visit [www.cair-net.org](http://www.cair-net.org).

**The First Anniversary of the Second Intifada**

by Tarek Fatah

Nearly a year ago, on 28 September 2000, Ariel Sharon and his storm troopers marched into Masjid Al Aqsa, desecrating it, trampling over Palestinian rights, and mocking the Muslim world's impotency.

That day was a turning point in our history. It was the beginning of the second Intifada; Inshallah, the decisive one. That day was the first day of the long march for the freedom of Palestine and the liberation of our Qibla-e-Awwal, Masjid Aqsa, which has been under Zionist occupation since 1967.

On Friday, September 28, 2001, the Canadian Arab Federation and the Council of Pakistani Canadians is jointly celebrating the first anniversary of the second Intifada.

Please mark your calendar to attend this historic anniversary.

**Date: Friday, September 28, 2001**

**Time: 6:30 PM.**

**Place: University of Toronto, OISE Auditorium**

**Address: 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto.**

**Admission: \$5.00**

British author and anti-war activist, Tariq Ali is coming to Toronto and will be the keynote speaker. Tariq Ali, a fervent supporter of the Palestinian revolution, is a Pakistani Briton who since 1968 has worked to expose the aims of US and Israeli strategic alliance against the Arab world.

Other than Tariq Ali's keynote address, Mahmoud Darwish's famous "Identity Card" will be read in Arabic, English and Urdu. We will also show the BBC documentary, "The Accused", identifying the role of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in the 1982 massacres.

We will be calling for the indictment of Ariel Sharon for the massacres he supervised in Sabra and Shatilla in 1982. For those who do not remember, in 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon. During the occupation, Israeli backed militias massacred over 2,000 unarmed Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla.

Please mark you calendars for Friday, September 28, 2001 for an evening of rejuvenation and reaffirmation of our conviction that one day, Inshallah very soon, Palestine will be free, Masjid Aqsa will be liberated, and Jerusalem will be the capital of the Palestinian people.

All articles in **The Ambition** are well researched. Being human, we may overlook something. If this happens, please call us and correct our mistakes.

**Beware of Workplace Discrimination**

A new report released by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation confirms the belief that in Canada, aboriginal and visible minority groups are disadvantaged in the areas of employment and income, and in levels of educational attainment.

The report, *UNEQUAL ACCESS: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment, and Income*, prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) combines for the first time, qualitative and quantitative analyses in the area of race relations in Canada.

Using a combination of census data, existing quantitative analyses, and focus group discussions, the authors Dr. Jean Lock Kunz, Anne Milan, and Sylvain Schetagne, conclude that notwithstanding the increase in the diversity of the Canadian population, racism and discrimination are still very much a part of the workplace environment.

While there is evidence that point to increased employment of aboriginals and visible minorities, that increase is largely at the bottom and middle levels of the labour force pyramid. The higher the pyramid, the less diverse, and the whiter it becomes.

Copies of the *UNEQUAL ACCESS* report may be obtained by visiting [www.crr.ca](http://www.crr.ca) or contacting us by e-mail at [info@crr.ca](mailto:info@crr.ca) or by phoning 1-888-240-4936.

The Canadian Islamic Congress invites Canadian Muslims to report any case of discrimination, with full documentation, to [cic@icnow.com](mailto:cic@icnow.com).

**First American Postage Stamp Celebrating 'Eid**

WASHINGTON, DC (1/8/2001) — An estimated six to seven million Muslims live in the United States of America. The US Postal Service will help the Muslim community celebrate two important holiday festivals by issuing the 'Eid stamp in Des Plaines, Illinois. The 34-cent 'Eid stamp is being issued on September 1 at the annual Islamic Society of North America's convention at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 North River Road, at 11:45 a.m. The stamp will be available at the convention and at post offices nationwide on September 1.

The 'Eid stamp commemorates the two most important festivals in the Islamic calendar: 'Eid al-Fitr and 'Eid al-Adha. "This is a proud moment for the Postal Service, the Muslim community, and Americans in general as we issue the first postage stamp to honour and commemorate two important Islamic celebrations," said Azeezaly S. Jaffer, Vice-President, Public Affairs and Communications for the Postal Service, who will dedicate the stamp.

The 'Eid stamp, designed by Zakariya of Arlington, Virginia, features the Arabic phrase "Eid Mubarak" in gold calligraphy on a blue background. English text on the stamps reads "EID GREETINGS."

To see the 'Eid stamp visit the Postal Store at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) and click on "Stamp Release Schedule." To see previous releases, select "Index of Stamp Issues."

## Prophet Ibrahim

Continued from page 3

beinclinations of their inherent intellect. Their judgement was blurred and they remain steeped in ancient traditions, simply because their forefathers had embraced such practices.

In the culmination of the debate, in order to emphasise his point, Ibrahim (pbuh) "made them (idols) into fragments" (21:58). He once again implored their reasoning by asking, "Then will you not use reason?" (21:67). But to no avail; they were dumbfounded with shame because they had no concrete excuse to legitimize or validate their beliefs. So, in their sheer stubbornness and hurry to silence Ibrahim (pbuh), they decided to burn him to death. However, Ibrahim (pbuh) remained defiant, against all obstacles, and so Allah said, "O fire, be coolness and safety upon Ibrahim" (21:69). Thus he was rescued unscathed from what would have been sure death. This exemplifies the enormous amount of steadfast bravery that Ibrahim (pbuh) possessed, for in the face of such adversities and odds, he always remained strong. This strength can be attributed to his high level of *iman* (faith). He knew that his guardian was Allah, and so consequently, none of their schemes could harm him in the least, without the will of Allah. Moreover, since he was condemning the false deities created from the imaginations of people, he was confident that he would be protected by the one, true reality, Allah. That is why his inner drive to preach Islam, the message enjoined upon him, was so unshakable.

The extent to which a person is willing to sacrifice things that are very dear to them is often a direct measure of the amount of loyalty that they hold for that belief. This subsequently leads to the development of selflessness and an unwavering commitment to that ideal. For Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh), this mission was spreading the message of Islam, and his deep resounding belief in Allah was personified by his capacity for self-sacrifice. This is best exemplified through an event, which transpired involving his eldest and only son at the time, Isma'il.

Obviously, for any father, his son is the most precious person in his life. Human instinct alone ensures that a parent will go to great lengths to guarantee their children's well be-

ing and do their utmost to safeguard them from any calamities. For Ibrahim (pbuh), these sentiments must have been even stronger, as precious Isma'il came into his life, when he was eighty-six years old! Furthermore, having recently faced the hardships of abandoning his native land, his child was practically the only joy in his life at that time.

As fate would have it, one night, Ibrahim (pbuh) experienced a prophetic and clear vision, in which he was ordained by Allah to sacrifice his own son. Yet, Ibrahim was one who always fulfilled his obligations (53:37), and so not surprisingly, even in such an instance he did not falter. Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) then approached his son to inform him of the duty that Allah had given him. Isma'il (the forbearing) remaining true to his name and lineage, without hesitation responded, "O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast" (37:102). Next, we are told: "And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead, We called to him, 'O Ibrahim, you have fulfilled the vision.' Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good. Indeed, this was the clear trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice" (37:103-107).

So, in place of Isma'il, a huge ram appeared at the last moment, just as Ibrahim (pbuh) was about to complete the task of his vision. Examination of this event serves as the most illustrative example of Ibrahim's unselfishness, constancy, and acceptance of whatever task or circumstance that Allah had placed in his

## Is Islam a thing of the past?

Continued from page 1

1,400 years old — the period since it was first revealed to the Prophet — but that it really dates from the first human that God created into existence. The word "Islam" itself is about knowing, loving, and communicating with the Creator of the whole universe. God's ongoing message has been delivered down through time by the likes of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.

As a whole way of being, Islam does not divide life into rigid, watertight compartments. It does not — it cannot — separate the spiritual and temporal activities of humankind;

life. This is because Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) truly possessed a "sound heart" (37:84). He never questioned his Lord or the numerous hardships he was put through, nor did he ever waiver the slightest in fulfilling them, for he understood that Allah is the one with infinite wisdom. Everything in life happens for a purpose and nothing is random.

As a result, he knew that believing men and women are often placed under trials and tribulations by their Lord, to see which of them truly remains steadfast and does not lose faith in the mercy of their Creator. Trials are meant to purify an individual and make them stronger. Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) wholeheartedly placed his trust in Allah and regardless of the situation he might have been in, he always remained content and patient, for he never despaired in the hope of intervention and deliverance from his Lord during times of distress.

rather, it weds these essential elements together. Thus, it is not only concerned with one's relationship with God, but also with the mode of Islam's main objective, which stands for the salvation and prosperity of the entire human race.

Whenever and wherever it has been freely put into practice, Islam has always blossomed forth in a society that has done history proud. In such societies, peace has prevailed, happiness prospered, learning increased, and science flourished. Many historians have rightly called such societies "golden."

For a bewildered world as ours, Islam represents great hope for the future. When we study its social, political, and economic systems, its principles of social and private conduct, we find that it heals the sores of humanity and brings with it a message of true life. It is an authentic panacea for the ailments of humanity and is as "modern" as tomorrow morning. Those who dismiss Islam as a thing of the past do not betray the faith — they only betray their abysmal ignorance of it!

[Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, a professor of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Waterloo, is National President of the Canadian Islamic Congress.]

where everyone enjoys dignity, respect, equality, and tranquility. Eventually, the believers — His true slaves — are to take the matters of the world in their hands and establish an Islamic World Order so that the entire globe becomes a peaceful, ideal society and that Shaytan (Satan) is proven wrong because human beings will have shown that they can and do live in peace and submission to Allah.

It is our choice. Do we want to fulfil the purpose of our creation by submitting to Allah in "slavery" and thus pleasing him by excelling in those virtues that are pleasing to Him, creating an ideal Islamic society and establishing an Islamic order of peace and justice in the world; or do we want to be thrown like trash into Hell?

## Investment

Continued from page 12

The list of eligible companies is prepared by Dow Jones with a Board of Shariah Advisors of world-renowned scholars.

Setting up an RESP for a child is easy. Contributors can be parents, grandparents, friends and other family members and a child can have more than one plan. Overall limits still apply even if there are multiple plans. The first step is to discuss your situation with your financial advisor or banking institution and decide how much you can afford. Secondly, you have to determine whether to use only Islamic investments. Finally, you have to complete the necessary paperwork, make application for the CESG and arrange to make the initial and subsequent contributions.

Remember this—with the magic of compounding, your child can have close to \$96,000 in his or her RESP at the time of entering university, if for 18 years you conscientiously make an annual contribution of \$2,000

## Universality of Dua

Continued from page 1

(13:11).

### Opportune Times for the Acceptance of Du'a

The following are *mustahab* times for the acceptance of invocations by Allah and should therefore not be neglected:

• At the end of each *fard salat* (obligatory prayer)

Abu Umamah al-Bahili (ra) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) was asked, "O Messenger of Allah, which Du'a is most likely to be heard?" He responded, "In the depth of the last part of the night, and after the obligatory (*fard*) prayers" (At-Tirmidhi).

Clearly, it is not a *bid'ah* to make Du'a after *salat*, as some people may say.

\* On Jumu'ah (Friday)

Abu Hurayra (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) mentioned the day of Jumu'ah and said that there is an hour during which if a Muslim supplicates to Allah for anything, He will grant it to him (Bukhari and Muslim).

\* In the morning

\* In the latter half of the night, at the time of *tahajjud salat*

Abu Hurayra (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Our Lord, Glorious and Sublime is He, descends every night to the lowest heaven, when the last third of the night remains and He says, 'Is there anyone to invoke Me so that I may respond to his invocation? Is there anyone to ask Me for something so that I may grant him his request? Is there anyone to ask for forgiveness so that I may forgive him?'" (Bukhari and Muslim).

\* In the month of Ramadan

\* On the Day of Arafat

\* At the time of *suhoor* and *iftar* (breaking fast)

Prayers of the Great Religious Personalities

The prayers of the Prophets (may the blessings of Allah be upon them) portray the most sublime feelings and loftiest aspirations that have arisen in the hearts of the greatest servants of Allah from time to time and must surely be regarded as model expressions for all spiritually minded people. Generally, we search for words to express our feelings to Almighty Allah, but the supplications of the Prophets of Allah present the finest examples for imitation and adaptation to suit our needs and desires. It is, of course, desirable that the feelings of the believer must be in tune with the words uttered and for that matter, as much as possible, with the feelings of the personage who first uttered them and found acceptance thereby before Allah. These invocations should also enliven the dormant devoutness within us and bring to the surface of the mind some of the deep yearnings of our soul.

(or \$167 each month). This assumes an annual investment earnings rate of 8% and the current CESG grant formula of \$400 per year. If this is doable it should fully pay for an undergraduate degree in Canada, thereby, easing any concerns you may have about your future educational expenses.

[Sr. Gemma is a Financial Advisor.]

## Fulfilling the purpose

Continued from page 1

slavery belongs only to Allah, the Creator. Being our Creator, He owns us. Hence, it is only He who is the legitimate Lord and Master. That is why the Islamic mission has always been to liberate the slaves of Allah (people) from the slavery of other human beings, for the slavery of their Creator.

Although human beings were created for slavery to Allah, He did not force people to become His slaves. He left it to people to use their intellect to recognise Him as their Creator and then willingly and freely submit to Him in full submission like a slave. We have been put on the

Earth for that test. Thus, the very reason for our being is that we willingly and freely become slaves of Allah alone. That is the purpose for which we were "made." If we choose to submit fully and exclusively, to our Lord and Master, we will enjoy the ultimate freedom for eternity in Jannah. If we do not fulfill the purpose of our creation by willingly and completely submitting to Him, we shall be trashed and thrown in Hell.

What is the extent of complete submission? Obviously, submission will not be complete unless and until every imaginable human action or endeavour, whether individual or collective, whether private or public, is envisioned and executed in total compliance with the wishes of the Master.

As slaves, our objective is understandable — we want to please the Lord and earn his approval to gain entry into Jannah. However, our slavery does not provide any benefit whatsoever to Allah. What is His purpose in requiring us to submit to Him completely?

His purpose is to help us excel both as individuals and as a society, by living the way He wants people to live: Individually, his true slave will be the best a human being can be — excelling in ethics, morals, behaviour, dealings, actions, interactions, fairness, equity, kindness, generosity, care, and grace. Collectively, these excellent human beings will be able to organize and establish themselves as the best society possible (an Islamic Society) — a loving, caring, sharing, peaceful, and just society

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## Kidz Korner

### The Only One

by Anisah S. David

South Dakota has many unique sites that make a person think of the beauty of Allah's creation, but maybe none more so than what can be found in the classroom of a small South Dakota town, where a young girl works on her school work.

It is not that the town is unique or the school, but the young woman is. She is a quiet, freckle-faced young woman, with a big smile for friends and strangers alike.

Although she has heard all the stories of how peer pressure influences teenagers, this young woman has made a personal decision, one that influences every aspect of her busy teenage life.

She is a strong and vibrant young woman. Active in hobbies such as historical re-enactments and a member of the school band as a flutist. She enjoys hanging out with her friends and writing letters to pen pals.

However, these are not the things that make her unique. Despite the fact that there are no other teenage Muslims in her school, or any in the town, this young Sister wears Hijab by choice. Al-Hamdulillah, she is a beam of light testifying to the beauty of Islam.

It all began years before, while she was just a small toddler, when her mother made the choice to socialise the young girl into feeling comfortable at wearing headscarves. It continued with lessons at home about the importance of Hijab, not only Islamically, but also socially, and how it was a protection for women.

The mother took great efforts to make it an issue of duty and right. Yet, the mother told her, that at puberty, it would be up to her to make that decision.

The mother helped the young woman prepare her friends with the idea that someday she would begin wearing the headscarf and that it was a sign of womanhood and was not something of shame or subjugation.

The young woman's mother also prepared her by personally wearing a great variety of styles and colours of Hijab, so as to illustrate to the girl that variety was available to her.

When the time came, the young woman would have to make the decision. Yet, she

had been given the tools needed to make that decision, even for someone living in the United States.

Then one Friday, the mother got a telephone call from the young woman, who was at school. The young woman was asking for her Hijab to be brought to school.

"I need my Hijab", she told her mother.

Then the mother inquired as to why, since the young woman was not going to Jumu'ah prayer.

The young woman responded, "You don't understand. I **need** my Hijab."

Then the mother realised what was going on and drove to town to deliver her daughter's Hijab.

Hence, the young woman had made her choice. She chose to fulfil her duty to Allah (swt) and donned the modest attire of Hijab, Al-Hamdulillah. Even though, she is the only one.

### An E-Mail From God

O servants of God  
Young Muslims of today.

You wait impatiently  
everyday  
For e-mail messages of  
the day.  
You log on several times a day  
It makes you feel good  
When you hear "You've got  
mail"  
You cannot wait to read it.

Some messages are good  
From your friends and  
relatives  
But most are plain junk  
That waste your time  
You delete them fast.

Did you know 1400 years ago  
God sent you a long 'e-mail'  
Through Angel Gabriel  
of course  
Revealed upon the Holy  
Prophet (pbuh).

Did you open that e-mail?  
Subject: Qur'an — The Guide  
Did you download that file?  
And bookmark it in your heart?

Had you opened that e-mail  
You had read in it all  
The stories of the prophets  
sent  
The stories of nations de  
stroyed.

There are warnings to  
mankind  
And guidance for your  
daily life  
Good news and hope for the  
future  
To bring you closer to God.

Now, every morning when you  
wake up  
Read this e-mail first  
Saved in Qur'an, al-Furqan  
Memorize and act upon it  
Dear young Muslims  
The future of Islam  
Author Unknown

## Dealing with Peer Pressure

by Aziza Hussain,  
Gr. 10 (Massachusetts, USA)

I am sure you have all faced struggle at school where your Islamic beliefs just are not the same as your non-Muslim friends' beliefs are. What do you do? Fear not.

Allah has stated in the Qur'an (2:286): "On no soul do we place a burden greater than it can bear" - so when thing gets tough and you feel like you can't cope, remember Allah and His

promise.

Once you have reached middle school and high school, it's known that most people get sucked into the "fun" of junior high and high school life. Everyone is going to dances, throwing mixed parties and worst of all, dating. Being the good Muslim as you are, you try to avoid these things, but after constant pressuring from your friends, you come to a point where you begin to question yourself and your

beliefs. "One party is no big deal," you say to yourself. One party IS a big deal in reality. I imagine suffering in Hell because of it? Scary thought, isn't it? Allah is indeed Al-Rahman, the Merciful, but do not take His Mercy for granted.

Not convinced? Well, keep reading. One thing to remember is that you are NOT alone. Muslim youth all over Canada and the US are constantly facing the same exact problems you are at the same exact time. It is definitely hard when all your friends are non-Muslims and do *Haraam* things, but there is a way out.

Having a close group of good Muslim friends is essential for any Muslim anywhere in the world. Everyone needs some sort of Muslim support, especially youth who are prone to give into the pressures and be greatly influenced. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Your best friends are those who remind you of Jannah (the paradise)." A friend who tries to make you drink, date, or party is not a real friend. A real friend would be concerned with your well being and would wish the best for you - Jannah, not Janhannam (the hell). It is your **Muslim** friends who remind you of Allah and help strengthen your I man.

A close relationship with Allah is needed especially when a person is faced with a problem. When one's level of I man is very high, he/she is constantly remembering Allah (in dhikr). When one is constantly thinking about Allah, he/she avoids doing wrong realizing it will anger Him. How does one gain a close relationship with Allah? Through Salat, reading the Qur'an, striving to be a better Muslim, having Taqwa (God-consciousness) and most of all believing in the Oneness of Allah (Tawhid.) When one loves Allah, he begins not to care what others think of him; therefore, it becomes easier to say "no" to the demands of this life. Be strong and do NOT give in to the temptations of this world. Remember you are trying to please the One up above and not the ones around you. Friends shape friends and influence each other. Be the one to influence, not the one to be influenced. Allah knows best. May Allah give you all the strength to resist the temptations of this world and guide you to the Straight Path. Ameen.

## Smiles!



At a school gathering, one little old lady approached a cute 5-year-old girl and asked her where she got her good looks. "I musta got 'em from my Daddy," said the little girl, "because Mommy's still got hers."

TEACHER: Why are you doing your math sums on the floor?  
STUDENT: You told me to do it without using tables!

GIRL: Dad, can you write in the dark?  
FATHER: I think so. What do you want me to write?  
GIRL: Your name on this card (report card).

TEACHER: In this box, I have a 10-foot snake  
STUDENT: You can't fool me, Teacher...  
snakes don't have feet.



TEACHER: How can you prevent diseases caused by biting insects?  
STUDENT: Don't bite any.

MOTHER: Why on Earth did you swallow the money I gave you?  
SON: You said it was my lunch money.

FATHER: Your teacher says she finds it impossible to teach you anything!  
SON: That's why I say she's no good!



MAN: How old is your father?  
BOY: As old as me.  
MAN: How can that be?  
BOY: He became a father only when I was born!

TEACHER: Correct the sentence, "A bull and a cow is grazing in the field."  
STUDENT: A cow and a bull are grazing in the field.  
TEACHER: How?  
STUDENT: Ladies first.

## Forgotten Promise

"You made a promise a long time ago,  
You may not remember, but it is so.  
You promised to obey no-one but Allah,  
you promised to be good and, make your salah.  
Dear brother and sister what happened to you?  
Why don't you do the things Allah commanded you to do?  
Why don't you keep the promise you made?  
Don't you want to be under Allah's shade?  
You're in this world for a reason you know,  
You're not here for glamour and show.  
Use your time wisely,  
don't act childishly.  
A day will come when Allah will say,  
"Enter the garden my believers,  
Go to Hell you disbelievers."  
Which one will you be?...  
Just remember the promise you made,  
so you could be under Allah's shade."

Hanna Mohammed,  
Grade 6, Madrasa-tu-al-Banaat

## Muslim Investment 101

by Gemma Salamat

As the long, lazy days of summer ends and another school year begins it is quite common to find people who are stressed out as the time approaches to pay up for the post-secondary education costs of their families.

Stress levels in recent times have increased and for several reasons. First, the average cost for a four-year undergraduate degree in Canada, including tuition, travel, residential costs and pocket money is in the range of \$40,000 - \$50,000 in today's dollars. Annual cost across Canada averages \$10,000 and this could easily double for post-graduate studies and the top professional degrees such as law, medicine and dentistry. But Canada is still affordable when compared to the US, where an Ivy League College could easily set you back \$50,000 US a year. Moreover, there is no relief in sight for the worried as the increases of more than 12% per year during the 1990's are expected to continue.

Stories abound about the staggering costs of post-secondary education and student's debt upon finishing university. But, are people putting aside money for this post secondary expense? According to a Statistics Survey released in April

2001, while the vast majority of Canadians do hope their children would go on to post-secondary education, more than 50% have not yet set aside any money nor have a sound plan for a savings program to fund this expense. Alarming too is the statistic that students' debt when finishing university rose to over \$25,000 in the 1990's (and unofficially to about \$30,000 in 2001).

Sounds grim? The above numbers are quite scary. But do we have a choice for post secondary education when most jobs today require a college diploma or university degree even at the entry level? Emphatically NO! Yet, many of us do not have the means to save. This is particularly true for new immigrants, many of whom are Muslims, and who have not yet mastered the language skills, or have the Canadian experience or connections to earn better wages. But without a savings plan and putting aside something on a regular basis, by the time today's young children are ready for post-secondary school, the cost could put their dreams out of reach.

One answer to the education cost dilemma is the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) which was in-

## The Staggering Costs of Post-Secondary Education and How to Deal With It

troduced by the Federal Government in 1998. The appeal of the program is that while contributions are not tax-deductible like the RRSP, income is not taxed until withdrawn and an incentive grant of 20% of the contributions, called a Canadian Education Savings Grant (CESG), is paid into the RESP by the Federal Government.

The total amount in an RESP at any time includes the principal, the CESG, and the investment earnings on the contributions and the CESG. When the student begins to use the RESP for education, the income accumulated on the contributions and the CESG, as well as the CESG itself become taxable. However, because the student typically has little other income, he or she effectively pays little or no tax on RESP income.

The key features of the RESP rules and how they work are as follows:

- \* The Federal Government provides a Canadian Education Savings Grant (CESG) of 20 cents for every dollar contributed to the RESP, up to a maximum grant of \$400 per year per child. The lifetime CESG maximum is \$7,200.

- \* The CESG is available to every child resident in Canada until the end of the year he or she turns 17. The child must have a Social Insurance Number (SIN). You can apply for the child's SIN at any time and if you do not have it yet, application forms are available from your local Human Resources Development Canada office. There is no charge for a first-time application and you would have to include with it a birth certificate and evidence of Canadian citizenship

- \* The maximum RESP contribution is \$4,000 per year per child. The lifetime contribution maximum is \$42,000.

- \* Contributions to the RESP can be made for up to 21 years (the CESG stops earlier) and the plan must be terminated by the 26<sup>th</sup> year.

- \* The CESG accumulates and can be carried forward to a maximum of \$800 in a given year. Missed contribution room cannot be made up in later years.

- \* Individual and family plans are permitted.

- \* If the RESP is cashed out before 10 years for reasons other than post-secondary education, the CESG money must be returned to the gov-

ernment.

- \* Accumulated income and the CESG are taxed in the hands of the beneficiary.

- \* The principal or accumulated contributions is always returned tax-free but investment earnings can be paid out, subject to income tax inclusion rules and a tax penalty of 20% tax. Alternatively, income can be transferred to the contributor's RRSP to a maximum of \$50,000, provided there is the RRSP room.

Many Muslims have RESP's for their children and family members. But those who want to invest using Islamic principles have only two options today—they may set up a self directed RESP investing in selected Islamic investments or use the StrategicNova SAMI mutual fund (the SAMI Fund).

Islamic investment principles are derived from the Koran (the Muslim holy book), the Sunna (the traditions of Prophet Mohammed) and the interpretations of Islamic scholars. Under these principles there can be no paying or receiving of interest or doing business with institutions which generate income from fixed interest and money trade or whose activities are considered "haram". Essentially, this means that investments in banks, insurance companies, trust companies and companies involved in pork, alcohol, tobacco, weapons, cinema, gambling, pornography and entertainment, are prohibited, as are investments using bonds, term deposits, Canada Savings bonds, and Treasury Bills.

The SAMI Fund is an appropriate fund for Islamic investments. According to its fund manager, StrategicNova and the prospectus filed with the Government, the fund invests only in shares of companies that carry on businesses which are consistent with Koranic principles.

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