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The Blessed Days of Dhul-Hijjah

Early Muslims used to exert themselves excessively in worshipping Allah

In what follows, we will highlight some of the Sunnah regarding these days, hoping by this to provide an incentive to make the best out of them and gain Allah's reward.

First Ten Days of Dhul-Hijjah

"The best days in the world are the Ten days (Saheeh Jaami'-us-Sagheer #1133).

"There are no days during which good deeds are more beloved by Allah than these (ten) days." (al-Bukhaaree, at-Tirmidhee and others) The Prophet (pbuh) was then asked: "Not even Jihad in Allah's way?"

He replied: "Not even Jihad in Allah's way; except for a person who went out (for Jihad) with his self and wealth and came back with none (i.e., lost all for Allah)." (at-Tirmidhee)

All good deeds can be done during these days and the early generations of Muslims used to exert themselves excessively in worshipping Allah. In particular, fasting and Dhikr (remembering Allah) are to be done in plenty on these days.

Dhikr

Ibn 'Abbaas commented on the verse "and to mention Allah's name [plentifully] on known days" (22:28) by saying: "...these known days are the ten days (of Dhul-Hijjah)." (Tafseer ibn Katheer)

Fasting

One of the wives of the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Allah's Messenger used to fast the (first) nine days of Dhul-Hijjah, the day of 'Ashooraa', and three days of each month (Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood #2129).

Fasting on all these days, however, is not Waajib (compulsory), nor is it a constant Dunnah that the Messenger (pbuh) never dropped. 'Aa'ishah said: "I never saw the Messenger (pbuh) fast the ten days" (Muslim).

The Day of 'Arafah — The Best Day of the Whole Year

The day of 'Arafah (the 9th day) is the day when the pilgrims stand in worship on the Mountain of 'Arafah.

"Fasting the day of 'Arafah expiates the [minor] sins of two years: a past one and a coming one. And fasting the day of 'Ashooraa' expiates the sins of the past year" (Muslim).

"There is no day on which Allah frees people from the Fire as He does on the day of 'Arafah. He comes close (to those standing on 'Arafah) and then reveals before His angels,

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Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and was made obligatory in the tenth, ninth, or sixth year, according to different reports. In the tenth year of Hijrah (migration), the Prophet (pbuh) announced that he intended to perform Hajj; this was the only time that he performed Hajj after the Hijrah to Madinah. The Muslims came from all over the Arabian Peninsula to perform Hajj with him. He left Madinah five days before the end of Dhul-Qa'dah. When he halted in Arafat, the following Ayah was revealed to him: "...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion..." (Qur'an 5:4).

The Muslims learned the rituals of the Hajj from the Prophet (pbuh) when he said: "Take your rituals from me." His Hajj was according to the Shari'ah (Islamic Law), especially matters pertaining to the Hajj, and general advice and laws which were mentioned in the Sermon of Arafat. For this reason, the scholars showed great interest in the farewell pilgrimage and derived many laws from it, dealing with the rituals of Hajj and other matters, of which the books of *fiqh* (jurisdiction) and Hadith explanation are full. Some of the scholars wrote books dealing specifically with the farewell pilgrimage.

A large gathering of Muslims participated in the event. They listened to the farewell sermon (Khutbat al-Wadaa') which the Prophet gave at Arafat in the middle of Ayyam al-Tashreeq (three days following the tenth of Dhul-Hijjah).

"Verily your blood and your property are as sacred and inviolable as the sacredness of this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this land of yours. Behold! Everything pertaining to the days of ignorance is under my feet, completely abolished. Abolished are also the blood revenges of the days of ignorance. The first claim of ours on blood revenge which I abolish is that of the son of Rabi'ah ibn al-Harith. And the *riba* (usury) of the pre-Islamic period is abolished, and the first of our usury I abolish is that of 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, for it is all abolished. Fear God concerning women! Verily you have taken them on the security of God, and intercourse with them has been made lawful unto you by words of God. You too have rights over them, and they should not allow anyone to sit on your bed whom you do not like. But if they do that, you can chastise them but not severely. Their rights upon you are that you should provide them with

food and clothing in a fitting manner. I have left among you the Book of God, and if you hold fast to it you would never go astray. And you would be asked about me [on the Day of Resurrection, now tell me] what would you say?"

Upon that, the audience said: "We bear witness that you have conveyed [the Message], discharged [the Ministry of Prophethood] and given wise (sincere) counsel." The narrator said: "He (the Prophet) then raised his forefinger toward the sky and pointed it at the people [and said]: "O God, bear witness, O God, bear witness" (related in Sahih Muslim).

The benefits of this Great Sermon, as adapted from Masaa'il Muhimma 'an il-'Umrah wa'l-Hajj by Muhammad Jameel Zeeno, are as follows:

- 1 Prohibition of shedding innocent blood and taking of wealth without right, which stresses Islam's protection of souls.
- 2 Nullification of validity of actions of *jahiliyyah* (ignorance).

3 Prohibition of taking *riba* (usury and interest), which is an increase on the principal, whether small or large. Allah the Most High says: "But if you repent, you may have your capital" (Qur'an 2:279).

4 Admonition to fulfill and give women their rights, and to deal with them in goodness. Many authentic Hadith have been narrated in this regard, which elucidate their rights and warn against taking and treating them unjustly.

5 Advice to strongly cling to the Book of Allah, in which lies the honour of Muslims and their victory. Likewise, the order to stick to the Sunnah, which explains the Qur'an, for verily the reason for Muslims' weakness today is their leaving of judging by the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger. There will be no victory for Muslims except by returning to these two sources.

6 Testimony of the Companions that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), conveyed the Message, dis-

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A Different 'Eid This Year

American Muslims are particularly grateful to our nation's Christian community for their overwhelming support to us in these past few months

By *Riad Z. Abdelkarim, MD*
United States of America

This year, 'Eid-ul-Fitr was somehow different. The 'Eid — which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan and represents the first of two major holidays in the Islamic calendar — was marked by the world's 1.2 billion Muslims and our nation's estimated 7 million American Muslims.

Sure, as always, American Muslims gathered at mosques and convention centres and halls early Sunday morning to offer communal 'Eid prayers. At one of the larger gatherings in our nation in southern California, an estimated 14,000 worshipers gathered at the regional fair grounds to pray and celebrate together. Men, women, and children of all stripes and backgrounds — dressed in their 'Eid-best clothes. While many donned typical Western attire such as suits with ties and dresses, some opted for traditional ethnic clothing from their places of origin. Men wearing traditional Af-

ghan turbans mingled with others wearing Pakistani gowns or traditional Arabic headdresses. Women wearing flowery African robes mixed with others wearing glittery Indian or traditional Palestinian dresses. Impatient children wearing crisp new clothes — purchased just for 'Eid — scurried about the prayer halls, impervious to their parents' calls for silence. But the differences in the 'Eid celebration this year were also apparent. Many worshipers — young and old — wore red, white, and blue pins with phrases such as "Proud American Muslim," demonstrating their pride in both their nation and their faith. Also, tight security prevailed this year from the parking lot to the prayer hall entrance. Large signs declaring that personal belongings were subject to search seemed ubiquitous. And a sheriff's bomb squad team made its rounds around the premises, complete with a bomb-sniffing dogs.

The heightened security at the event came as a relief to those who

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Editorial

We Must Establish An Islamic State — At Home

Most Muslims today think that the answer to all our woes is in re-establishing an Islamic state — the Khilafah. We dream and long for our Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen, who will come, move his magic wand of Islam, and make everything right.

We have the best manual — the Glorious Qur'an — in our possession, and yet we see ourselves being beaten in all the walks of life. There are scores of Muslim states and over one billion Muslims all over the world and still, we have no influence over the world's political, economic, scientific, or military gains. Muslims have a very low rate of literacy. We are looked down upon as being backward — although Muslims established the ground for most of today's technological advances. We are living a life of fear and are being harassed in our own lands. We are facing international and civil wars, population displacement, and helplessness, which are imposed upon us — sometimes by outsiders and sometimes by ourselves. As a result, the largest numbers of refugees come from the Muslim world.

Not only that, the most highly developed Muslim civilisation that remained for centuries the beacon of light for the world, is now being mocked at by the ones who do not have any moral authority for their actions. We are encountering defeat after defeat on every front at the hands of those who are mostly secular, or Disbelievers. We also find ourselves ever defending and "explaining" our faith and practices to those who claim to be "experts" on Islam yet have no idea about its teachings. As a result, we are frustrated, bitter, and angry with the people or nations that we think are the reason for our fall and collectively dub them as "the West." We blame the West for our problems, vent out some anger, and then go to sleep.

Let's stop whining and look at ourselves — honestly.

We want to convince the whole world of the beauty of Islam, but are WE convinced of it? Do we PRACTISE it? The truth is that we do everything un-Islamic in the name of Islam.

I know somebody who wanted to buy a used car. When he realised that the salesperson was Muslim, he said to him, "You are my Muslim brother. Help me. Don't charge me the taxes." This is not help. It's cheating. It's un-Islamic. If two Muslims behave dishonestly, it does not become Islamic. What kind of Islam are we following? Moreover, this is only one little example. We do exactly the opposite of what we preach. We tell lies, spend our time backbiting, rather than in remembrance of Allah, abuse our family, show prejudice against others on ethnic grounds, and so on. Therefore, can we say that we practise Islamic cheating, Islamic lying, Islamic backbiting, Islamic laziness, Islamic this and Islamic that?

Then, we call ourselves moderate Muslims, militant Muslims, fundamentalist Muslims, extremist Muslims, practising Muslims, secular Muslims, and this Muslim and that Muslim, but the only thing we are not is "Muslims." It needs self-restraint to be a "Muslim," as Islam does not need any prefix.

We cry for the well being of Muslims all over the world but cannot make any tiny bit of sacrifice for ourselves. How many of us, for example, can take a vow not to be late for our appointments any more?

Furthermore, we are so fragmented and disunited. There is tribalism, racism, feudalism, etc. Islam is the religion of peace, practice, and patience. It did not spread over half the world by any "-isms."

Islam means peace. True. But it also means submission to God. Are we doing that? We are reaping what we have been sowing for scores of years: passiveness.

We make resolutions and our talks are a lot of hot air. It's easy to blame the West for all our woes, but if we look inside ourselves, we know that it's not the West that is as much our enemy. It is our own *nafs* (inner being). We cannot make a commitment. We can not keep our words. We have to realize that WE must take responsibility for our own actions.

If we fail a test at school, we start again and work harder. We do not blame others who are better than us, or the teacher, or the school system. Then why don't we take the same avenue here?

We must start taking one day at a time. Start from today. Promise that I will give up one sinful habit each day and then stick to it. What we need to do is avoid the major sins and Allah will forgive our minor ones.

We have to start with ourselves. We talk about global unity and Islamic world order, whereas our own homes are out of order. We need to purify our own hearts and deeds first, then think of the others. Let the charity begin at home. Let the fragrance tell the world about the bloom. Let us start from possible and Allah will help us achieve the apparent impossible. This is the Sunnah of Allah.

In the very recent past, Muslims were given a couple of chances to establish Islam in their lands. First, it was the birth of Pakistan, as there was no foreign power interfering with us at that time. Secondly, Afghanistan: after the Soviet retreat, all the world powers had left Afghanistan alone. It is regrettable that we have badly failed with both opportunities. Why? Because we had not done our homework first. We were able to physically defeat the Soviets, but our Inner Jihad was not complete, which is why we could not establish an exemplary Islamic state. We continued fighting amongst ourselves on petty issues, and our dream turned into a nightmare.

We have to truthfully believe and practise Islam in our private lives first — at all costs — and then everything will fall into place. The Islamic State of Madinah did not sprout over night. It was the fruit of the continuous struggle for years with steadfastness and perseverance. This is the Sunnah of the Prophet.

As long as we will try to have an easy way out, and keep trying to put the buggy before the horse, we will be a laughing matter for the whole world and deemed to be unsuccessful.

Asma Warsi

Letters / Opinion

A Fate Most Deserving

For the last thirty years or so, dating back to the Middle East conflict in the late sixties, Muslims have been the targets and victims of the most horrific atrocities heaped upon them. The Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosova, Chechnya, and Afghanistan are the prime examples.

And yet Muslims everywhere still side with and give in to those who oppress them. Muslim governments allow the enemies of Islam to use their soil to launch attacks on helpless Muslim states that would lead to the slaughter of innocent men, women and children.

There can be only one explanation for this malaise. We are more interested at looking after our own interests, have lost our sense of justice and brotherhood which once made us — the Muslim nations — the most glorious and magnanimous of all countries. We have sunk into the lowest of low moral decay and lethargy.

Brothers and sisters in Islam, if a Muslim anywhere gets hurt, all Muslims everywhere should feel the pain. When such an awakening takes place and we return to the fold of Allah's only religion, Islam, all our difficulties will disappear and no one will dare to cause us any pain. But we must work to replace our decadent leaders with truly Islamic leadership.

And until that happens, I see no end to our present plight. We will be ethnically cleansed and destroyed. We richly deserve this fate.

But, feeling sorry and depressed about our plight is alone not going to improve our lot. We have to be proactive in changing our situation. Muslims in this part of the world are, by and large more enlightened in terms of being generally more educated and not suffering economic hardships that Muslims in many other parts of the world do.

So as beginners, let us see what we here in Ontario and in Canada can do to change things around. Here are a few offerings:

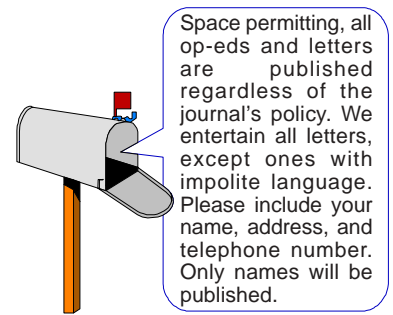
1. Understanding Islam: Islam is Allah's first and last religion. It is a doctrine of peace and mercy. We have to, as Muslims, truly understand what Islam advocates and learn to differentiate it from cultural overtones that we introduce into our lives and call it Islam.

2. We must integrate with the society we live in. This does not mean we give up our Islamic values. When we truly understand Islam, we will realize that respect of our neighbors and indeed of the society we live in, is something that was the hallmark of our beloved Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) character and way of life. If we do that, it will go a long way in removing some of the misconceptions about us.

3. Abroad, we must invest in education; both Islamic studies and the sciences. Islamic education will help Muslims understand what our religion is all about and allow us to resist propaganda by power hungry partisan groups who associate their agenda as being Islamic. Education in the sciences will improve the economic condition of Muslims. Both forms of education will uplift us from the yoke of those few who control the lives of the majority of the population.

4. We develop a voice whereby we are able to speak from a position of power and strength. This will be possible when we acquire political clout. This will be achieved when we are better educated. Because only then will we acquire economic and social recognition. These in turn will give us a voice in society.

5. We should portray a positive image. Too often we are victimized through undeserved adverse publicity. It is, therefore, important that the people of the countries we live in know what is Islam. The present misconception is that Islam is synonymous with terrorism. On October 5th, the Oprah Winfrey show on TV went a long way in making North Americans aware of Islam and its values. I am sure that her show touched the hearts of millions of Americans the



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letters@theambition.com

right way. It is now up to us to carry this forward through every available media.

6. We must establish a Bayt-ul-Maal that will give us the funding needed in furthering our cause.

7. And to achieve the above, we must resolve the differences between us. This includes ending once and for all the Shi'a-Sunni conflict that has done nothing more than weaken us as an Ummah. Locally, we have a number of mosques and other Islamic organizations, each of which have their own agendas and corporate values. These should not lead to a conflict amongst us to a point where we become disunited and fragmented so that we lose sight of what needs to be done in becoming a strong and respected Ummah.

Brothers and sisters in Islam, the list of what we can do is not limited to the initiatives listed above. However, let us begin somewhere. Let us sit together and expand on them as necessary.

Munawwar Merchant

Zero Tolerance Needed Toward Rep. Chambliss' Islamophobia

by James O. Hacking, III
United States of America

C. Saxby Chambliss is a ranking Republican member of Congress (USA) who serves as the head of the House Task Force on Terrorism and Homeland Security. As such, he wields an enormous amount of power and influence in shaping our nation's response to the horrendous attacks of September 11, 2001.

Representative Chambliss recently made a comment that has been underreported by the media and which reveals a great deal about the mindset of those charged with protecting our country from future attacks. In a meeting with approximately thirty Georgia law enforcement officials, Representative Chambliss stated that in order to combat the threat of terrorism, the sheriffs of the Peach State should be turned loose to "arrest every Muslim that comes across the state line."

Do I even need to point out how outrageous this comment is? Can you imagine what would happen to a politician who directed an entire state's law enforcement personnel to arrest every African-American or Jew who deigned to visit his state? But in today's post-9/11 climate, Chambliss' offensive remark has

been nary a blip on the radar screen.

Although Chambliss later dismissed the minor criticism he faced after the comment by claiming that he was merely joking, it was actually quite a stupid thing to do. First, it flies in the face of President Bush's oft-repeated refrain that the war against terrorism is not a war against Islam. Perhaps Mr. Chambliss should check with his commander-in-chief and the titular head of the Republican Party before showing the true colors of both himself and those of his ilk. Is President Bush speaking the truth when he makes his claim or is the sentiment of Representative Chambliss the unspoken truth.

Second, the remark lumps together the six million law-abiding Muslim-Americans who have done absolutely nothing wrong with nineteen terrorist nuts who perpetrated their evil acts in their twisted and perverted interpretation of Islam. Why would any Muslim ever want to visit Georgia after this remark and is it fair that such a Muslim should be reluctant from moving about our country in the first place?

A perhaps greater problem caused by Chambliss' ridiculous statement is the fact that the com-

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A Wave of Conversion to Islam in the United States of America

Muslim American reports in the Arab press indicate that Muslim Da'awa efforts have been unusually successful since the September 11 attacks. 'Alaa Bayumi, Director of Arab Affairs at the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), wrote in the London daily that "non-Muslim Americans are now interested in getting to know Islam. There are a number of signs: Libraries have run out of books on Islam and the Middle East. English translations of the Qur'an head the American best-seller list. The Americans are showing increasing willingness to convert to Islam since September 11. Thousands of non-Muslim Americans have responded to invitations to visit mosques, resembling the waves of the sea [crashing on the shore] one after another. All this is happening in a political atmosphere, that, at least verbally, encourages non-Muslim Americans' openness towards Muslims in America and in the Islamic world, as the American president has said many times in his speeches..."

CAIR Chairman Nihad Awad told the Saudi paper 'Ukaz that "34,000

Americans have converted to Islam following the events of September 11, and this is the highest rate reached in the U.S. since Islam arrived there."

According to Dr. Walid A. Fatihi, instructor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, Boston has recently become a center of Islamic proselytizing. On September 22, 2001, Al-Fatihi sent a letter to the Egyptian weekly *Al-Ahram Al-Arabi*, in which he described the unfolding of events since September 11: "... From the first day, the media began to insinuate that Muslim Arab hands were behind this incident, at noon, the directors and administration of the Islamic Center of Boston held an emergency meeting, and I stayed on the line with them from my clinic. We decided to hold a blood drive, and we set up a committee to contact the Red Cross and organize it for us. We invited the media to cover the event..."

"All of us tried to grab onto every scrap of information that would indicate that Muslim Arab hands were not involved in the loathsome crime. Yes, my brothers and sisters, we

tried to prove our humanity on the day we found ourselves attacked from all sides. Our hearts bled and our spokesman said that proselytizing in the name of Allah had been set back 50 years in the U.S. and in the entire world..."

"On Saturday, September 15, I went with my wife and children to the biggest church in Boston (Trinity Church in Copley Square) by official invitation of the Islamic Society of Boston, to represent Islam by special invitation of the senators of Boston. Present were the mayor of Boston, his wife, and the heads of the universities. There were more than 1,000 people there, with media coverage by one of Boston's main television stations. We were received like ambassadors. I sat with my wife and children in the front row, next to the mayor's wife. In his sermon, the priest defended Islam as a monotheistic religion, telling the audience that I represented the Islamic Society of Boston.

"After the sermon was over, he stood at my side as I read an official statement issued by the leading Muslim clerics condemning the incident (i.e. the attacks). The statement explained Islam's stance and principles, and its sublime precepts. Afterwards, I read Qur'anic verses translated into English. These were moments that I will never forget because the entire church burst into tears upon hearing the passages of the words of Allah!

"Emotion swept over us. One said to me: 'I do not understand the Arabic language, but there is no doubt that the things you said are the words of Allah.' As she left the church weeping, a woman put a piece of paper in my hand; on the paper was written: 'Forgive us for our past and for our present. Keep proselytizing to us.' Another man stood at the entrance of the

church, his eyes teary, and said, 'You are just like us; no, you are better than us.'

"On Sunday, September 16, the Islamic Society of Boston issued an open invitation to the Islamic Center in Cambridge, located between Harvard and MIT. We did not expect more than 100 people, but to our surprise more than 1,000 people came, among them the neighbours, the university lecturers, members of the clergy, and even the leaders of the priests from the nearby churches, who invited us to speak on Islam. All expressed solidarity with Muslims. Many questions flowed to us. Everyone wanted to know about Islam and to understand its precepts.

"Of all the questions, not a single one attacked me; on the contrary, we saw [the people's] eyes filling with tears when they heard about Islam and its sublime principles. Many of them had never heard about Islam before. Well, they had heard about Islam only through the biased media. That same day, I was invited again to participate in a meeting in the church, and again I saw the same things. On Thursday, a delegation of 300 students and lecturers from Harvard visited the Centre of the Islamic Society of Boston, accompanied by the American Ambassador to Vienna. They sat on the floor of the mosque, which was filled to capacity. We explained to them the precepts of Islam, and defended it from any suspicions [promulgated in the media]. I again read to them from the verses of Allah, and [their] eyes filled with tears. The audience was moved, and many asked to participate in the weekly lessons for non-Muslims held by the Islamic Center..."

"On Friday, September 21, the Muslims participated in a closed meeting with the governor of Massachusetts. In the meeting, a discussion was held on introducing Islam into the school curriculum, to inform the [American] people and to fight racism against Muslims arising from the American people's ignorance regarding the religion. With the governor's support, measures to examine implementation of this goal were agreed upon..."

"These are only some of the examples of what happened and is happening in the city of Boston, and in many other American cities, during these days. Da'wah work has not been undermined, and has not been set back 50 years, as we thought in the first days after September 11. On the contrary, the 11 days that have passed are like 11 years in the history of proselytizing in the name of Allah. I write to you today with the absolute confidence that over

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From the Qur'an

And their Lord responded to them: "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed — I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward."
(3:195)

From the Hadith

Narrated Ibn 'Umar (ra): The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever takes a piece of land of others unjustly, he will sink down the seven Earths on the Day of Resurrection."

Related by
Al-Bukhari
(3:634)

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Being Successful

By Ayub Hamid

We all want to succeed. Every one of us wants to be a winner. But what is success? Who is a winner? Does success mean amassing wealth, attaining leadership, adopting the profession of one's choice, being popular, consolidating power, enjoying prestige, maximizing happiness, etc.? Is the winner the one who leads a country, commands huge audiences, gets his way, wins elections, overcomes his adversaries, becomes a Nobel Laureate, emerges as a sports icon, or becomes influential? Is it he who is a popular celebrity, rich and famous, adored by countless fans, pictured and interviewed all over the world, viewed as a super hero, well-known for religious rank, respected for Islamic knowledge, recognized as a community leader, etc.? Or is it he whose children are educated in the best of the educational institutions, excel in their careers and marry the choicest of spouses?

The Holy Qur'an informs us that: "Whoever is saved from the Fire and admitted to the Jannah, he indeed is successful" (3:185). And that: "The real losers will be those who lose themselves and their families on the Day of Judgement. Ah, that is the manifest loss!" (39:15).

These verses remind us of the

reality that none of the aforementioned 'successes' are truly successes unless a person is able to avoid Hell and is granted admission into Jannah (Heaven). If a person and his family cannot attain this ultimate success for themselves, he is an utter loser! Just imagine the most successful person you have ever known or heard of — the one towards whom you perhaps felt envious. Now, imagine him in the fire of Hell — in pain, deprived of all wishes or needs, unable to find a way out, totally frustrated and remorseful, but helpless and doomed forever. He could have ended up in Hell for any number of reasons: Perhaps it was because he worked so hard for his success that he seldom had time for Allah's remembrance or for fulfilling his Islamic obligations; he was so involved in his worldly mission that he could not pay any attention to the Hereafter; his intentions were not merely and purely for Allah; he divided his life into Islamic and secular segments; he followed rituals of Islam faithfully but ran his life according to the customs and traditions of his society; he was careless about little mistakes; or, because he attained his successes at the expense of others. Whatever the reason, he ended up in the fire. Is he successful? All the

success of this life would feel like a fleeting mirage and the real pain would continue for eternity. How stupid is it, that for temporary gain, he is going to suffer permanent pain?

On the other hand, think of a person who seemed to be so disadvantaged that you felt pity for him. Now, see him in Paradise — enjoying the pleasures and comforts beyond one's imaginations and having every wish and desire fulfilled instantly. He could have been rewarded because he was always remembering Allah and focusing on doing the right thing in any circumstance — the way Allah wanted him to do. He did not care what others thought or whether he succeeded in his goals in this world or not. All he cared about was doing his best in the circumstances according to the ethical, moral and spiritual standard that pleased Allah. He was a man of principles and nerves of steel, withstanding any and every difficulty that came his way as a result of living by his principles, par excellence. He suffered deprivation in this world because of his strict lifestyle, but remained honest and dedicated despite adversity. He earnestly cared for the well being of all — even his adversaries. He generously shared whatever little he had with others. He remained cheerful despite adversity of his own circumstances. He endured and remained steadfast when he was abused because people could not stand his uncompromising stance on critical issues; he was isolated and ostracized for his strict lifestyle and insistence on principles; he was accused of seeking prominence and leadership for his efforts to bring people to the Islamic lifestyle; he was ridiculed for his innocent simplicity and for religious emotions; he was avoided for his frankness, bringing Allah in everything and viewing everything from an Islamic perspective. He continued his struggle the way the Prophet (peace be upon him) would have done whether he was appreciated or not, whether he was recognized or not, whether he was accepted or not, and whether he succeeded or not! Now, in paradise, he is en-

joying the stupendous returns of a great bargain that he had made with Allah. He took a fleeting pain for eternal gain. He is the one who truly succeeded.

The Prophet (pbuh) explained how insignificant, transient, and fleeting the experiences of this world are by sharing the following information:

"The most prosperous person of the world to be thrown in the Fire will be brought on the Day of Judgement and thrown into the Fire for just enough time to let the Fire penetrate his body. Then he will be asked, 'O man, did you ever have good time in your life or enjoyed any bounties?' He will respond, 'By God, never, O Lord!'" Similarly, a person to be entered into Jannah who had the most destitute life in the world will be brought. He will be placed into Jannah for a time long enough to be accustomed to its luxuries. Then he will be asked, 'O man! Have you ever experienced poverty or tough circumstances?' He will respond, 'By God, O Lord, I have neither experienced poverty nor tough circumstances ever'" (Muslim).

However, people will not be judged arbitrarily. Our end depends on whether we treat this transitory life as a test and live it as such or

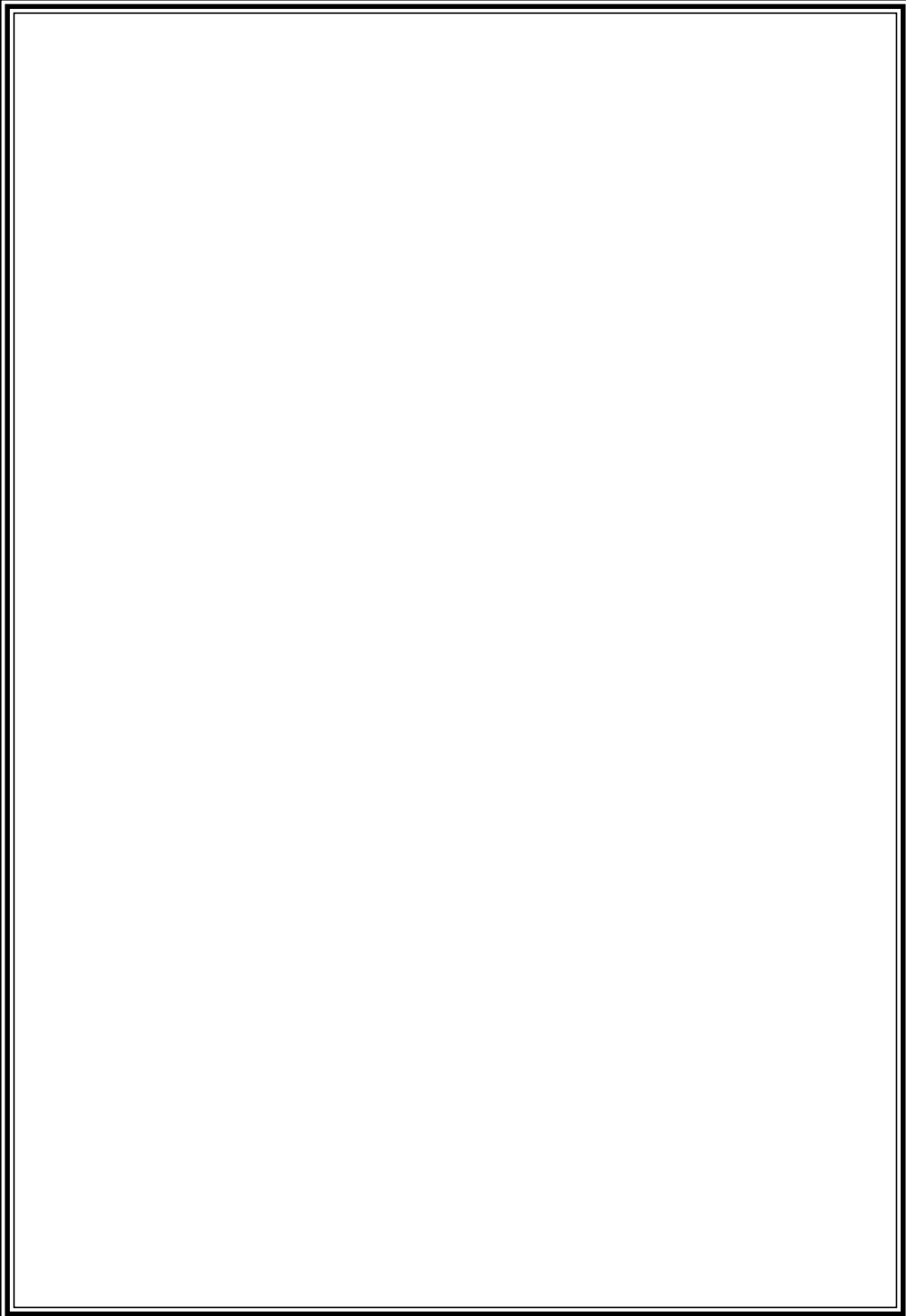
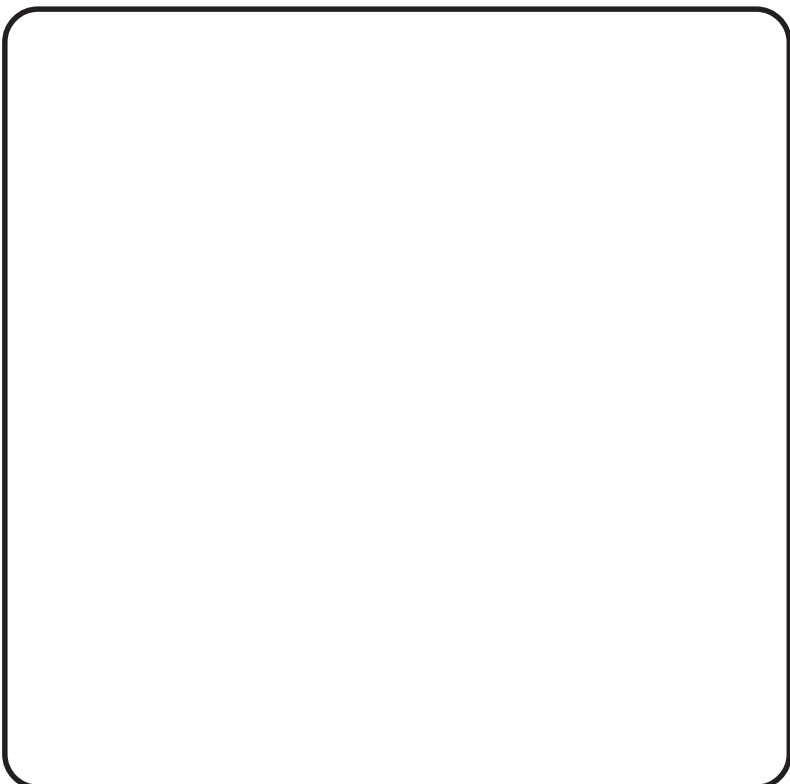
whether we live here as if this life itself is the goal. Those who really believe in its being a test, live in obedience to Allah. On every decision they make or action they undertake, their concern is: Is it right? Will it be marked as a correct answer? Others do not worry about obedience to Allah but do what they themselves desire or feel should be done. They are rebellious. Living in His land and not caring for His rules is rebellion. The eternal rule for success and failure is: "Thus, whoever rebels and gives preference to the life of this world, Fire will be his destination. And whoever worries about standing before his Lord (for Judgement) and controls his desires, Jannah will be his destination" (79:37-41).

Those who assume that their claim to be Muslims will guarantee them success are having baseless expectations of Allah.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "A wise person is he who judges himself and works for the life after death. And the loser is he who follows his desires and then expects to be rewarded by Allah" (Tirmidhi and Mishkaah).

So, do we want to be a winner, never to lose again? Do we want a success that is never going to fail us? Now is the time to aim for it!

**No Muslims in the world should feel good
As long there are Muslims crying for food
How can a Muslim not feel shame
If there is a single Muslim suffering in pain**
— Munawwar Merchant



Day of Arafat and 'Eid-ul-Adha: When and How?

The Day of Arafat is the day when an estimated 2.5 million Muslim pilgrims will gather on the plains of the mountain of Arafat near Makkah towards the end of their spiritual journey of Hajj. Several thousands Canadian Muslims will be there. On that special day of praying, pilgrims will communicate with their Creator and ask for the best in this life and the best in the Hereafter. The following day Muslim pilgrims will celebrate 'Eid-ul-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice. A celebration to mark different occasions in the history of the faithful, involving Prophet Ibrahim, his wife Hajar, and their son Isma'il. Non-pilgrim Muslims mark the Day of Arafat by observing an Islamic fast and they join their fellow pilgrims in celebrating 'Eid-ul-Adha the following day. Most Muslim countries and countries with Muslim minority which have a grand *mufti* mark the Day of Arafat and 'Eid-ul-Adha by following the actual Day of Arafat and that of 'Eid-ul-Adha as observed by the pilgrims. Both the actual Day of Arafat and that of 'Eid-ul-Adha are known nine days in advance to all Muslims around the world including Canadian Muslims at home. However some Muslims and Islamic centers in Canada and the U.S. follow the local Islamic calendar in observing the Day of Arafat and/or 'Eid-ul-Adha which could differ by one day from the actual days observed by their fellow pilgrims.

Why a nun can be covered from head to toe and she's respected for devoting herself to God, but when a Muslimah does that, she's "oppressed"?

Why a Jew can grow a beard and he's just practicing his faith, and when a Muslim does that, he's an extremist?

When a Western woman stays at home to look after her house and kids she's sacrificing herself and doing good for the household, but when a Muslim woman does so, she "needs

to be liberated"?

Why is it that when a child dedicates himself to a subject, he has potential, and when a child dedicates himself to Islam, he is hopeless?

When a Christian kills someone, religion is not mentioned (e.g., IRA) but when a Muslim is charged with a crime, it's Islam that goes to trial?

But then again, why is it after all that, Islam is still the fastest growing religion in the world?

Submitted by Javed Ahmad

Networking His Way to New 'Customers'

There's something different about Egyptian-born Muslim leader Yahia Abdul-Rahman.

Local African-American Muslim activist Najee Ali noticed it when he heard Abdul-Rahman's Friday sermon a few years ago. Abdul-Rahman publicly encouraging inter-ethnic marriages.

Shi'a Muslim leader Moustafa Al-Qawzini noticed it too. Since Abdul-Rahman took over as head of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California last year, Al-Qawzini says, Abdul-Rahman has frequently invited Shi'a Muslims to speak, and has driven miles to attend their events.

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben, president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California says, the two have shared several conversations that have not once degenerated into political tensions. "He is on an ethical and spiritual crusade to take the values of his tradition and communicate those to people, and I think he is effective because of that."

Abdul-Rahman, 57, an effusive and elegant man, explains, "I want people to know we're all brothers and sisters, and we're all serving God." With his inclusive vision, Abdul-Rahman has made a striking splash as chairman of the Islamic council. The consultative group, which represents half a million Southland Muslims in 67 Islamic centers.

On 9/11, Abdul-Rahman started organizing the most diverse religious gathering in the region, with Christians and Jews, Muslims and Mormons, Buddhists and Bahais and Hindus praying along with Pasadena city officials. He can be irrepressible, for instance, does he make contacts with Hindus and Sikhs? "Every time I see a person with a turban and beard, I go up and ask who is their highest authority," he says. "I'm collecting numbers."

One of his biggest dreams is to open a U.S. office of the Cairo-based Al-Azhar University, the world's most prestigious seat of Islamic learning. Education is key, he says. "My motto in life," he says, "is to start with the possible to achieve the impossible. Many people start with the impossible and fall flat on their face."

Helpful Hints

By Sister Shireen Patel

Q: I know of someone who is an abusive parent towards his children. It really bothers me but I find myself too angered to do anything. What would you advise me to do?

A: Unfortunately humans are such that they continue following a cycle they are familiar with; be it good or bad because it is the easiest for them and won't stop until they truly see it as wrong. Perhaps this person was abused as a child and sees it as the only method of "discipline" and not really abuse. This cycle is mainly due to lack of knowledge and denial. In order to break it the person needs to be informed about his actions, and the consequences to such actions. Not so much legal, but when his children grow up what will they think of him? How would it affect them in the long run? I suggest if you feel you can control yourself and approach the issue with a direct yet calm nature then perhaps you should speak to this person. Enlighten him about the reality of his actions. You need to spark thought in him, so that he can contemplate about what he does, instead of just blindly continuing this abusive cycle, which most probably his children would do too. If he wasn't abused as a child, perhaps it's a means of feeling "powerful" or having authority, or misusing his rights in Islam. "The best man is he who is kindest to his family," said the Prophet (pbuh). Make sure he understands that his family is a trust to him. If you don't feel you can do this, talk to an Imam. Perhaps he can talk to the brother. And if you're a sister or know of a suitable sister maybe you can talk to the mother of the children (if she is around). The basic point here is someone has to talk, and the lines of communication need to be opened and kept wide open. Obviously he needs help, so try not to be mad, but help him. It's a harsh way to cry out for help. In regards to your anger, the Prophet (pbuh) said if you say 'A'udhu billahi minash-Shaitan (I seek refuge with Allah from Satan) then all your anger will go away, Insha-Allah. May the Almighty guide us on the right guidance, and protect us from the wrong that is done by man. Ameen.

Q: I met a guy on the Internet. He's a good brother and I think he's exactly what I want in a spouse, but how do I tell my parents?

A: Internet hook-ups is not exactly new any more. Almost everyone, if not everyone, has Internet at home. And those who do, majority of them chat. Chat at times can be a good thing, but it can also lead to a lot of *fitnah*. However, in this case, you have already established the fact that you want to get married, and although talking with the opposite sex is not advisable, it's done. It is good that you have intentions for marriage. I hope the feeling on the other side is just as sincere. Depending on the mentality of your parents, they may react with anger or perhaps be open minded to this brother you have met. Whatever the case may be, you should have thought of it before all this happened. Go to your parents and tell them you want to get married, and that you've found a brother whom you think is good and you would like them to meet him. Distance may be a problem; make sure they are aware of where this brother is located. Tell them a bit about him, and whatever you know about the family. Tell them why exactly you feel he is a good brother. This is not an easy thing to do, but "if you don't ask, you don't get"; not to mention you cannot continue this relationship if marriage is not possible. And marriage is only possible with the consent of your *wali* (guardian, i.e., father). You've gone too far, more so emotionally than anything else to back out. Backing out meaning not tell your parents. They deserve to know, and Insha-Allah, they will react in the best of your interest. I suggest you sincerely do Salaat-ul-Istikhara, which is two *raka'ah* *nafl* Salaat followed by a *du'a* (for Istikhara, you can find it in almost all *du'a* books). Then go talk to you parents, and take things from there. If you really want to get married, telling your parents is the ONLY way it will happen. If you truly believe this is a good brother and if he is, then Insha-Allah, it will work out. If not, then remember there is good in everything. Meeting over the Internet can be quite risky because "talk is cheap." And even though you may chat a lot and can tell quite a bit about the person from what/how they type, nothing really says it like their behavior. Only 7% of communication is actually transmitted through words, where as 55% is actual body language. "Love" can be blind sister, and sometimes we allow ourselves to believe something that really isn't there. Marriage is a life long commitment and a very serious decision, so please deal with it seriously. It is possible to marry someone "off the Net," and has happened many times, some resulting in wonderful marriages and others unfortunately ending in divorce. A third party would be of great benefit to you, perhaps uncover what you choose to subconsciously neglect. Be honest and upfront with your parents, and leave the rest to the Almighty to take care of. May Allah help you with this hurdle in life, and bless you with nothing but the best spouse for you... Ameen.

Answers for Kidz Korner

1a / 2c / 3c / 4b / 5a / 6b

Journey to Islam

Highlighting the experiences of new Muslims

By Thomas Maguire

NOTE: This article was submitted to Mirror International by the author, who identifies himself as the cousin of John Walker—the “American Taliban” captured by Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan.

I first met John Walker during a trip to visit his family before my junior year of college, in 1995. Although six years his senior, I found John to be a mature and thoughtful individual whose interests and curiosities closely paralleled my own. We both nurtured a fledgling interest in Islam that chiefly centered around the pseudo-Muslim murmurs within hip-hop music. While my interest in Islam stalled around issues of social freedom and self-gratification, John exhibited a glowing innocence that propelled him to openly investigate the truth of Islam.

After graduating from college in 1997, I moved to the [San Francisco] Bay Area, and John and I had a chance to spend more time together. It was then that he finally declared his faith in Islam. Having witnessed various intervals of his journey, it was clear that conversion brought him an inner satisfaction and a sense of completion. John, now Sulayman, introduced me to some knowledgeable Muslims who were able to answer

some of my nagging questions about the religion. Soon after, I took the *shahadah* as well and accepted Islam. As I began to meet Muslims in the Bay Area, those who already knew Sulayman spoke of him with admiration and enthusiasm. I can still remember the smiles people offered me when I mentioned that I was his cousin.

Sulayman and I only spent a short time together after we had both become Muslim. I moved to the East Coast, and Sulayman eventually left for Yemen to begin learning Arabic. For several years, although I identified myself as Muslim, I dragged my feet in making the necessary changes in life—abandoning Haram practices, establishing prayer, and fasting. It wasn't until I got married in 1999 that I began to address my lack of attention to Islam. At this time, Sulayman was in Yemen for the second time, and we began communicating by e-mail.

Like many Muslim converts, I was disillusioned by the unfortunate factionalism in the Islamic world. When I committed myself to practicing the religion properly, I still worried about navigating the various perspectives and in-fighting among Muslims. Sulayman has been portrayed by the media as impression-

able and naïve—easily led into extremism. Yet, when I encountered different groups and schools of thought within Islam, I always found that Sulayman offered a carefully balanced and knowledgeable critique of various perspectives without condemning or damning those with whom he disagreed. In this area, Sulayman has been the most exemplary person I have known in his ability to balance an intense commitment to the purest elements of Islam with a general tolerance of other Muslims.

Although he remains in the relatively early stages of Islamic knowledge, his personal qualities—faith, patience, piety, kindness—are like those that I have witnessed among the most learned in religion.

Last Spring, at age 25, I once again went to my 19-year-old younger cousin for his trustworthy and thoughtful advice about another group of Muslims—the Taliban. With doubts about the validity of Western propaganda against the Taliban, and realizing that Sulayman's experience in Pakistan may give him more direct knowledge, I asked what he thought of the movement. He explained that his view of the Taliban was built on consistently positive impressions from a series of personal interactions.

He wrote that there are “many things I've seen in the Taliban that have led me to believe that they are indeed what they claim to be—the one and only purely Islamic state in the world.”

Sulayman approached the Taliban like he did all Muslims—with tolerance, positive expectations, and the best of manners. Far from being naïve and foolish, Sulayman practiced the often difficult and commonly overlooked etiquette of approaching other Muslims without suspicion. Like any self-respecting Muslim, Sulayman was attracted to the Taliban rhetoric of rule by the Qur'an and Sunnah alone. If the Taliban were insincere in pursuing their stated goals, Sulayman cannot be held responsible.

Sulayman's parents assert that he was always a pacifist. Indeed, Sulayman remains a pacifist. The Qur'an clearly states that Muslims must stand up and fight for a just cause, even if their hearts are averse to war. That is exactly what Sulayman did. *Newsweek* reported that Sulayman first went to fight in Kashmir. While Muslims in America, including myself, are content with making *du'a* for the oppressed, Sulayman risked his life for people he had never met, and only for the sake of Allah.

Similarly, if Sulayman engaged in any fighting against a band of rapists and thugs neatly dubbed the Northern Alliance, he maintained a pattern of behavior consistent with any standard of heroism. Moreover, even if Sulayman's good intentions were wrongly manipulated during his journey in Afghanistan, he entered the country long before the current conflict, never intended to abandon his citizenship, and never actively fought against the U.S.

Sulayman's grandmother, my aunt, once accused me of “getting John into this Islam stuff”—false, but a reasonable assumption considering our age difference. Insha-Allah, I would be blessed if I was at all responsible for his development as a Muslim. Sulayman is a champion of Islam. Years ago, when Sulayman was introducing me as a new Muslim at a San Francisco mosque, one brother commented that “this *deen* is thicker than blood.” Yes, Sulayman is my cousin, so I will support him out of family loyalty. But as Sulayman's brothers and sisters in Islam, Muslims must work to defend him against an unjust and irrational prosecution, because he is one of our best.

Source: <http://www.readmirror.com/wa/dec19401801.htm>

Around the World

Muslims in China: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making

By Faisal Kutty

The tragic events of the fateful morning on September 11th are being exploited by many to advance their own agendas. The Chinese government is no exception, according to recent reports put out by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The situation was bad enough before September 11th.

For the past few years, the Chinese government has systematically suppressed and persecuted the Muslims of the former East Turkestan or Uighuristan, misleadingly renamed Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) by its Chinese conquerors. Despite the word “autonomous” in the name, all major political decisions are made from Beijing by ethnic Chinese. Xinjiang is China’s largest province covering an area of approximately 1.6 million square kilometres.

Executions, torture, arbitrary detention, unfair political trials and destruction of property were among the offences catalogued in a 92-page report released in 1998 by Amnesty International. Most of the findings are corroborated by other human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch as well as the U.S. State Department.

No doubt, what has been uncovered is only part of the story. Indeed, Amnesty noted in the 1998 report that it was just the “tip of the iceberg,” given the restrictions on information and access. At the time I shuddered to think of the true state of affairs.

In the wake of the attacks on New York and Washington, the Chinese

authorities have now found new justification in its own war against “terrorists.” “China’s support of the [American] war against terrorism will be a pretext for gaining international support — or at least silence — for its crackdown on ethnic Uighurs in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region,” states a report released in October 2001 by Human Rights Watch.

Chinese authorities have conveniently “discovered” a Uighur East Tujue network which is linked to the Taliban and other terrorist cells. The rhetoric has intensified in the last few weeks with Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao alleging that there was proof linking Uighur agitators with “the Bin Laden clique.” Many observers, including human rights groups, dispute this claim. Most of the separatists are overwhelmingly pan-Turkic and have advocated peaceful means. In fact, even the Islamic groups such as the “Party of Allah” or the “Islamic Uighur Party” do not claim any connection with any pan-Islamic network. “There is no evidence that they are inspired by the strict form of Islam that characterizes the Taliban,” notes Human Rights Watch. “Whether secular or religious, the pro-independence groups in Xinjiang are over-

whelmingly ethno-nationalist movements, that is, articulated along ethnic lines, not religious ones. There is no significant cooperation among Xinjiang’s different Muslim ethnic groups of Kazakhs, Mongols, Tajiks, and Uighurs.” Moreover, many observers have pointed out that the Uighurs are ethnically closer to the Turkic Muslims (the Northern Alliance) of Afghanistan than the

reconquering of the territory in 1876. Interestingly, the area was renamed Xinjiang, or “New Frontier” in Mandarin by the foreign invaders.

Out of the ashes of the Japan-China war in the mid-1900’s, once again a Muslim republic of East Turkestan came into being in the northern part of the territory. But this was short lived, as Mao Tse Tung forcefully consolidated his control over the entire region after his 1949

Kirghizistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan — have increasingly called for independence. Their calls for the right to self-determination have elicited brutal force and repression from Chinese authorities. Widespread arbitrary arrests, closure of mosques and Islamic schools, and a crackdown on Islamic gatherings have intensified recently.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty report that thousands have been jailed and hundreds executed over the last few years. In fact, according to one report published by *The Times* of London, Islamic activists are forced to drink alcohol before their execution, as a final insult.

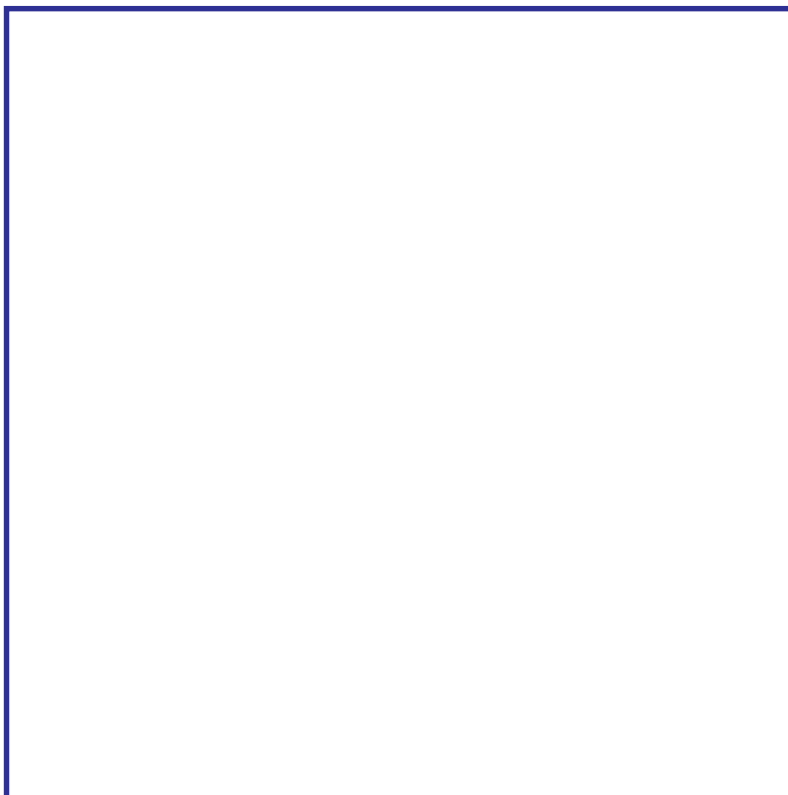
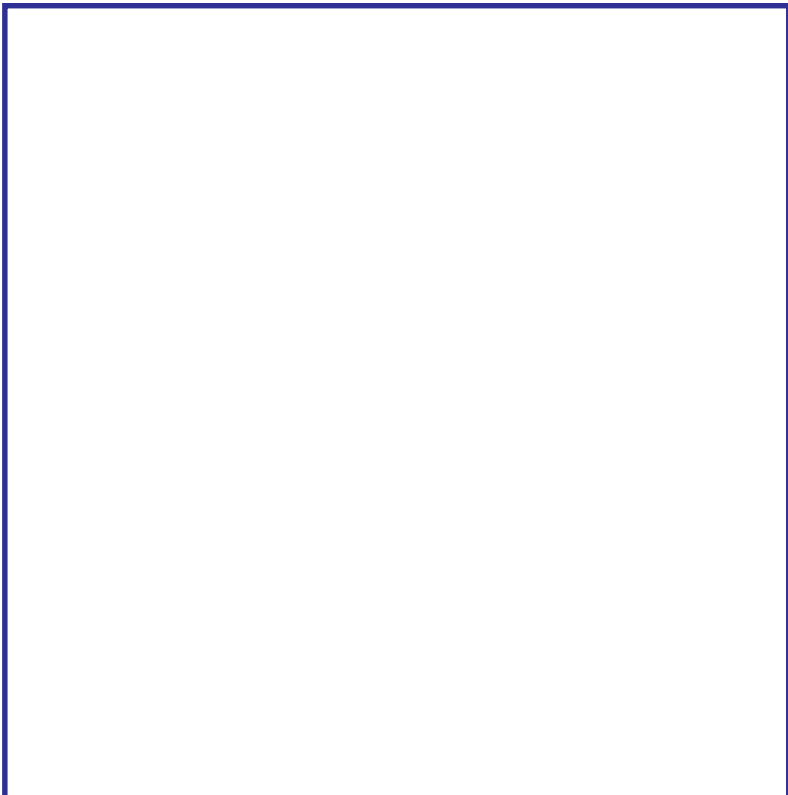
The Uighurs appear not to be safe even outside the territory. In fact, Human Rights Watch also reported that in March 1998, more than 30 Muslim restaurants were destroyed by authorities in a Beijing area known as “Xinjiang Village,” and more than 1,000 Muslims were made homeless. I could go on cataloguing the atrocities, but suffice to say that another round of ethnic cleansing — albeit silent and subtle — is taking place.

Aside from perpetrating flagrant violations of human rights, the Chinese have also instituted a systematic and discriminatory program to change the demographics in XUAR. Since the 1950’s the central authorities have worked to change the ethnic mix of the region. According to Paul George, who wrote a commentary on the situation for Canada’s spy agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), China’s one-child family planning policy does not apply to any ethnic Han couple relocating to East Turkistan. Not surprisingly, such incentives have altered the demographic mix significantly. The population estimates for the territory range from 18 million to 40 million. The Muslim population of East Turkistan in 1949 was well above 90% — about 78% Uighurs — and ethnic Chinese (Han) composed only about 6%. According to the Chinese Census figures released in November

Continued on page 9



Official Name: People’s Republic of China
Area: 9,596,960 square kilometres (mainland)
Population: 1.2 billion (mainland)
Capital City: Beijing (population: 12.6 million)
People: Han Chinese (93%), plus Mongol, Zhuang, Manchu, and Uighur minorities
Languages: *Putonghua* (Beijing Mandarin dialect), and Cantonese
Religion: Officially atheist; Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism (no statistics available); Muslim (14 million), and Christian (7 million)
Government: Communist Republic
Head of State: Jiang Zemin



Muslims in China: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making

Continued from page 8

2001, the Chinese now make up about 40% thanks to the state policy of ethnic dilution. In fact, the U.S. State Department in its 1998 China human rights report, states that according to some estimates, the migration of ethnic Han in "recent decades has caused the Han-Uighur ratio in the capital of Urumqi to shift from 20-to-80 to 80-to-20." The dilution policy started by Mao appears to be continuing unabated as the most recent Census figures also reveal that the Han (Chinese) population grew by 32% in the 1990's, compared to a growth of only 16% for the non-Chinese.

The Han have also gained control over the economic and political landscape. This has been achieved by banning the Uighur language and extending preferential treatment in employment, education, health care, and other services to the growing Han community. The new economic infusion into the area, to boost proven oil reserves to 3.3 billion tons, will not help the unemployment situation of Muslims. "Uighurs are simply not hired by Chinese firms," says Georgetown University China expert Dr. James Millward. "At job fairs, 'Uighurs need not apply' signs are standard." Those locals without any facility for the Chinese language are totally out of the loop.

Because of the centrality of Islam in the Uighur culture, the government has also focused on removing any symbols of Islam. Islamic schools and mosques which were only opened during the administration of Deng Xiao Ping, are once again seriously restricted. Religious activity has been curtailed and only material and personnel approved by the Chinese authorities are permitted. More recently, students at state schools and universities are formally forbidden to pray, keep fast during Ramadan, and even possession of a Qur'an is a serious offence according to Human Rights Watch.

Why is China carrying out this program of slow and silent "ethnic cleansing?" It appears to be driven by both strategic military and economic reasons. Probably most important is the fact that XUAR shares borders with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. There-

fore, the territory serves quite well as a buffer zone against external threats. In the recent past, it was the threat from the Soviet Union being guarded against, but even after the break-up of the Soviet empire, the region continues to be home to one of the largest, if not the largest, contingent of Chinese military personnel and equipment. In fact, most of the country's nuclear ballistic missiles are housed in Xinjiang. And according to the CSIS study, the region is vital today in the monitoring of "potentially turbulent economic and political developments in the Central Asian republics."

Aside from its geopolitical significance, the province's vast reserve of natural resources, including lead, zinc, gold, uranium, coal, and oil also explains China's willingness to use any means to keep Xinjiang under total Chinese control. Some estimates place the oil and gas reserves at 2.44 billion tons in the Tarim Basin. Attempts to access these reserves have been unsuccessful to date. But even if the reserves are exaggerated or non-existent, the territory is still vital in providing access to the massive oil deposits in Central Asia.

Indeed, the oil needed to lubricate the Chinese economic machinery may have to be piped in from the republics through Xinjiang.

China has thus far downplayed the situation in Xinjiang, labeling it an internal problem of curtailing "terrorists," "extremists," and "splittists." It is time for the world to send a fact-finding mission to Xinjiang to assess the situation before it gets any worse. The Muslim world, which has provided open markets and an endless supply of oil, is in a great position to speak out on behalf of the Uighur Muslims. Unfortunately, rather than showing solidarity with their Turkic and Muslim brethren, a number of them, namely, Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, have entered into an agreement with China to combat so-called "Islamic Fundamentalism."

This has been a prime focus of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is composed of the foregoing Muslim nations as well as China and Russia. Shamefully, under the guise of this agreement and in clear violation of the U.N. Convention on Refugees, Kazakhstan has forcibly repatriated Uighurs, and the others have

joined in the persecution. Even Pakistan, for its own selfish geopolitical reasons (read military and nuclear reasons), has contributed to the subjugation of the Uighurs. Over the last few years, Pakistan has repatriated Uighur students and closed Uighur guest-houses in Islamabad.

While the world is totally focused on America's war on terrorism and other more

fashionable hot spots, it is important not to forget the plight of Chinese Muslims and to be cognizant of the fact that the criminals sitting in Beijing are watching closely for the right opportunity to wipe out the Uighur thorn. The situation in Xinjiang is one that needs to be placed on the international agenda immediately, before there is nothing left to save.

And now the events of September 11th make it imperative that the plight of Chinese Muslims be highlighted. "The Chinese authorities do not distinguish between 'terrorism' and 'separatism'" Amnesty International said. "Separatism in fact covers a broad range of activities, most of which amount to no more than peaceful opposition or dissent. Preaching or teaching Islam outside government controls is also considered subversive."

Therefore it is more crucial than ever that the international community take a more hard-line approach for selfish reasons, if not out of any moral or humanitarian conviction. Ultimately, the repression will only force a largely peaceful opposition

Students at state schools and universities are formally forbidden to pray, keep fast during Ramadan and, even possession of a Qur'an is a serious offence

2002 Forecast for Asia: Bloodshed and Death

HONG KONG: With India and Pakistan at a flashpoint, Afghanistan's future uncertain, and many national insurgencies festering, the grim forecast by analysts for Asia in 2002 is more bloodshed and death. Although regional experts believe conflict is not necessarily on the rise in Asia, decades-old points of tension will next year inevitably lead to a repeat of the thousands of violent deaths that occurred in 2001.

"If you start looking at conflicts throughout the region, you see an inability of countries to resolve tensions that lead to these conflicts," the Asia Pacific editor of the respected *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Robert Karniol, told AFP. "Essentially all of these conflicts date back a very long time."

Karniol pointed to the menacing build-up of Pakistan and Indian troops along their border and in the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir as an example of unresolved tensions leading to conflict. The nuclear rivals have fought two wars over Kashmir since they gained independence from Britain in 1947. Karniol said the latest crisis stemmed from the same issues as those that sparked the previous conflicts.

"This is the most recent flare up in 50 years of tension ... and the only thing we can say with any degree of certainty is they haven't addressed the core issues." Meanwhile the Muslim separatist drive in Kashmir, which India accuses Pakistan of backing, continues to exact a grisly toll. According to official Indian figures, separatist-related violence in Kashmir claimed 3,440 lives in 2001, including 2,017 militants, 927 civilians, and 496 security personnel.

The US-led military action inside

to Chinese persecution to escalate into uncontrollable violent opposition which will also drag in the rest of the world. We need no better example than the current global war on terrorism.

Faisal Kutty is a Toronto-based lawyer and writer.

nearby Afghanistan during 2001 has also thrown up many potential regional security pitfalls for 2002, despite the early promise of the war-ravaged nation's new government, according to Karniol. "The consequences of America's actions are very unpredictable for Afghanistan, for Pakistan, and for Central Asia," Karniol said.

Hong Kong-based regional analyst Lau Siu Kai agreed, warning Pakistan, which had previously supported the Taliban regime and now has a potentially unfriendly government on its western border in Afghanistan as well as India to the east. "Right now Pakistan is facing hostility on both sides of its boundaries so it is under a lot of pressure," said Lau, the Hong Kong Institute of Asia Pacific Studies' associate director.

Elsewhere in Asia, experts predict thousands of people will die in ongoing national crises in a manner little different from 2001 and previous years. In Sri Lanka, an average of 2,000 people have been killed each year since the Tamil Tigers began their push for an independent homeland in the island's northeast in 1972.

And although Sri Lanka's new prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, is pushing for peace, with his government and the Tigers in the midst of their first bilateral truce in six years, Karniol is not optimistic.

"In the past, the Tamil Tigers have used peace negotiations and ceasefires as an excuse to regroup and reinforce and have come back even stronger," he warned. In Indonesia, 2001 was another bloody year with human rights monitors estimating 1,700 people were killed in a government crackdown on separatist guerrillas in the resource-rich province of Aceh.

Indigenous Dayak tribes slaughtered about 500 Madurese migrants in the jungles of Borneo in March. And in the far eastern province of Irian Jaya, the leader of the independence movement, Theys Eluay, was among more than 50 people killed as the government beefed up security forces.

Continued on page 11

Harsh Words

I ran into a stranger as he passed by.
 "Oh excuse me please" was my reply.
 He said, "Please excuse me too;
 I wasn't watching for you."
 We were very polite, this stranger and I.
 We went on our way and we said good-bye.

But at home a different story is told,
 How we treat our loved ones, young and old.
 Later that day, cooking the evening meal,
 My son stood beside me very still.
 When I turned, I nearly knocked him down.
 "Move out of the way," I said with a frown.
 He walked away, his little heart broken.
 I didn't realize how harshly I'd spoken.
 While I lay awake in bed,
 God's still small voice came to me and said;

"While dealing with a stranger, common courtesy you use,
 But the children you love, you seem to abuse.
 Go look on the kitchen floor,
 You'll find some flowers there by the door.

"Those are the flowers he brought for you.
 He picked them himself; pink yellow and blue.
 He stood very quietly not to spoil the surprise,
 And you never saw the tears that filled his little eyes."

By this time, I felt very small,
 And now my tears began to fall.
 I quietly went and knelt by his bed;
 "Wake up, little one, wake up," I said.
 "Are these the flowers you picked for me?"
 He smiled, "I found 'em out by the tree."
 "I picked 'em because they're pretty like you.
 I knew you'd like 'em, especially the blue."
 I said, "Son, I'm very sorry for the way I acted today;
 I shouldn't have yelled at you that way."
 He said, "Oh, Mom, that's okay.
 I love you anyway.
 I said, "Son, I love you too,
 And I do like the flowers, especially the blue."

Are you aware that if we died tomorrow, the company that we are working for could easily replace us in a matter of days. But the family we left behind will feel the loss for the rest of their lives. And come to think of it, we pour ourselves more into work than to our own family, an unwise investment indeed, don't you think so? So what is behind the story? Do you know what the word FAMILY means?

**FAMILY = (F)ATHER (A)ND (M)OTHER,
 (I) (L)OVE (Y)OU**

*Submitted by Sally
 Author unknown*

2002 Forecast for Asia

Continued from page 9

In the Philippines, the centuries-old battle between the national government and Muslims seeking an independent homeland in the south claimed hundreds of lives. A resurgent communist movement also caused deaths. And in Nepal, more than 500 people were killed as Maoist rebels stepped up a five-year rebellion to overthrow the monarchy.

Other armed insurgents committed to their bloody path include at least 30 rebel groups in India's north-eastern states, whose demands range from secession to greater autonomy and the right to self-determination. More than 75,000 people have lost their lives to insurgency in the northeast since India's independence from Britain 54 years ago.

In neighbouring Myanmar, the battle between ethnic Karen rebels and the military junta has led to as many as 300,000 people being internally displaced and countless others killed. Aside from national insur-

gencies, major regional tensions are poised, as always to become international flash points, analysts say.

Karniol rates the tensions between China and Taiwan, the two Koreas, and India and Pakistan as the three with the most potential to flare into major conflicts. China regards Taiwan as a renegade province awaiting reunification after they split in 1949 at the end of a civil war, while the two Koreas have been technically at war for more than 50 years.

However, Lau believes most countries are becoming increasingly pragmatic and will not instigate a conflict with rivals because it would hurt the economy. "For example even though there's a conflict between China and Taiwan, both sides are exercising a great deal of restraint. All countries in this part of the world have too much at stake to wage war against each other," Lau said.

Source: Jang, Pakistan

Islamophobia

Continued from page 2

ment is receiving much greater coverage by the media in the Arab world. Our leaders should be working to assuage the legitimate concerns of our Muslim allies around the world that people who practice Islam in America are being targets of hate crimes, that Muslims and Arabs are being detained and questioned in the United States without the benefit of due process and that charities which have been accused of nothing more than providing food and sustenance to suffering women and children in Palestine are being shut down wholesale by executive order. Instead, we get Representative Chambliss with his inexcusable, divisive rhetoric — and he is one of the people involved in setting the anti-terrorism agenda.

Speaker Dennis Hastert should immediately remove Chambliss from the important post on the Task Force. Anything short of his removal will render future actions by the Task Force completely illegitimate and will provide additional fodder to the many people around the world who feel that innocent Muslims in America are being treated in an entirely unfair manner in the land of the free.

James O. Hacking III is an American Muslim attorney in Webster Groves, Missouri, and a columnist with the Independent Writers Syndicate.

A Wave of Conversion in the USA

Continued from page 3

the next few years, Islam will spread in America and in the entire world, Allah willing, much more quickly than it has spread in the past, because the entire world is asking, "What is Islam?"

Fatihi's reports of American Christians crying upon hearing Qur'anic verses have a historical context. This type of narrative is about part of the ethos of Islamic proselytizing. It comes from the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) invitation to the Christian community of Najran, located in what is today North Yemen, to visit the mosque. When the Christians of Najran were exposed to the verses of the Qur'an, the tradition says they burst into tears and converted to Islam.

The phenomenon of sincere Christians shedding tears as they recognize the truth and beauty of Islam is mentioned in the Qur'an: "And you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers who say, 'We are Christians.' That is because among them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant. And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth. They say, 'Our Lord, we have believed, so register us among the witnesses'" (5:82-83).

Fatihi also published an article in the London daily *Al-Hayat*: "... There are initial signs that the intensive campaign of education about Islam has begun to bear fruit. For example, the rate of converts to Islam since September 11 has doubled. There is solidarity with the Muslims on the part of many non-Muslims in American universities. For example, dozens of non-Muslim American women students at Wayne University have put on veils as a symbol of identification with the Muslim women students at the university and at the other universities of America.

Media Reading List for 2001

The Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) suggests some of its top choices of recent publications dealing with the media. These titles are "must" reading for all who care about the media's role in our democracy. Enjoy.

1. Anti-Islam in the Canadian Media* by CIC, September 1998, e-mail: cic@cinow.com
 2. Anti-Islam in the Canadian Media* by CIC, September 1999, e-mail: cic@cinow.com
 3. Anti-Islam in the Canadian Media* by CIC, September 2000, e-mail: cic@cinow.com
 4. Anti-Islam in the Canadian Media* by CIC, September 2001, e-mail: cic@cinow.com
 5. Canadian Media Coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict** by CIC, December 2000, e-mail: cic@cinow.com
 6. Canadian Media Coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict** by CIC (to be published in September 2001) e-mail: cic@cinow.com
 7. Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times by Robert W. McChesney, University of Illinois Press, 1999.
 8. Yesterday's News: Why Canada's Daily Newspapers are Failing Us by John Miller, Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, 1998.
 9. Islamic Peril: Media and Global Violence by Karim H. Karim, Black Rose Books, 2000.
 10. The Media Monopoly (5th edition) by Ben H. Bagdikian, Beacon Press, Boston, 1997.
 11. Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture by Jack G. Shaheen, Occasional Papers Series, 1997.
 12. Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity by Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, Garamond Press, Toronto, 1998.
 13. Journalism in the New Millennium, edited by Donna Logan, Sing Tao School of Journalism, 1998.
- * An annual case study and content ranking of *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *Toronto Sun*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Montréal Gazette*, *La Presse*, *Maclean's*, *Reader's Digest*, and *CBC-TV English-language news services*.
- ** A special case study and Islamic content ranking of *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*.

"One of the most important topics [in an NPR broadcast] was an interview with several young women at American universities who recently

Newsroom

US offers \$10m for clues to Mulla Omar, Osama

PESHAWAR: Finally, the United States government has announced ten million dollars bounty for providing credible information leading to the whereabouts of Taliban supreme leader, Mulla Muhammad Omar and top leaders of the ousted students' militia and al-Qaeda network, reported *The DailyJang*.

Muslims Blast CNN's J.Lo Blow

Muslims are seething at CNN and MTV after the cable-TV giants teamed up to surprise sheltered Afghan kids with sexy, skin-baring photos of Jennifer Lopez (J.Lo) and get their reactions on camera.

Jason Bellini whipped out an American teen magazine featuring J.Lo, showed it to traditionally dressed Afghan teens and asked: "What do you think?"

Disgusted Muslim leaders said the interviews, produced and edited by MTV and aired on CNN's *Newsnight with Aaron Brown*, were disrespectful. "You have to know what the limits are. That's why I think that all journalists should take courses in Islam — Islam 101."

A CNN spokeswoman said the newsmen, formerly at MTV, had used the magazine with J.Lo's image as a prop to quiz the kids about their knowledge of American pop stars. "It was not Jason's intention to be dis-

Women's Islamic University in Islamabad: Admission Open for Overseas Muslims

Alhamdulillah, by the grace of Allah, a new non-profit private university dedicated for women's education has started the admission process for it's first academic year starting in Fall 2002. It will have residence facilities for out-of-town students.

The intent is to manage it at international standards. Insha-Allah, it will open an alternate option for young overseas Pakistani women for degree programs — besides serving the Pakistani nation. Many of the board members are US expats. Please contact the University (web, e-mail, phone) if you need more information.

All development funding for the University is from private donations. Limited scholarships for deserving candidates will also be available. For further information, contact:

Women's Islamic University
Street 5, Faiz Ahmed Faiz Road
H-8/2, Islamabad-44000, Pakistan
Website: wiu.edu.pk
E-Mail: info@wiu.edu.pk

respectful. CNN prides itself on its commitment to treat all cultures with respect," she insisted in a prepared statement.

For full article please read: <http://www.pagesix.com/celebritynews/7528.htm>

Afghanistan Needs Your Help — Now!

Canadian Relief Foundation (CRF) reports that 600 metric tons of wheat is being distributed to 4,000 families in Paktia province as the security situation is now improving for distribution to take place.

CRF will start a survey on December 31, 2001 and begin distribution to 10,000 families in Kabul whose origins are from the Hazara tribe. Fourteen male and fourteen female CRF staff are involved in this survey and distribution project.

Both projects are funded by the United Nations WFP (World Food Program).

In another significant development, CRF has signed an agreement with a local Afghan women's NGO called Afghan Women's Aid (AWA). AWA has become CRF's partner in implementing projects for women and children in Afghanistan. Their role is to help boost women's morale and to encourage more women to take a greater role in helping rebuild their country.

We encourage our donors to help AWA's cause by donating through CRF as they need funds for administration and running their office in Kabul.

CRF is deeply grateful for the continuing support of our donors.

CRF is an apolitical, non-denominational Brantford-Canada based relief agency established in December, 1999. It is a partner agency with the United Nations World Food Programme. For more information, please visit <http://www.canadianrelief.ca/>

Send your donations to: 150 Brant Ave., Brantford, ON N3T 3H7.

Voice of a destitute and paraplegic person.

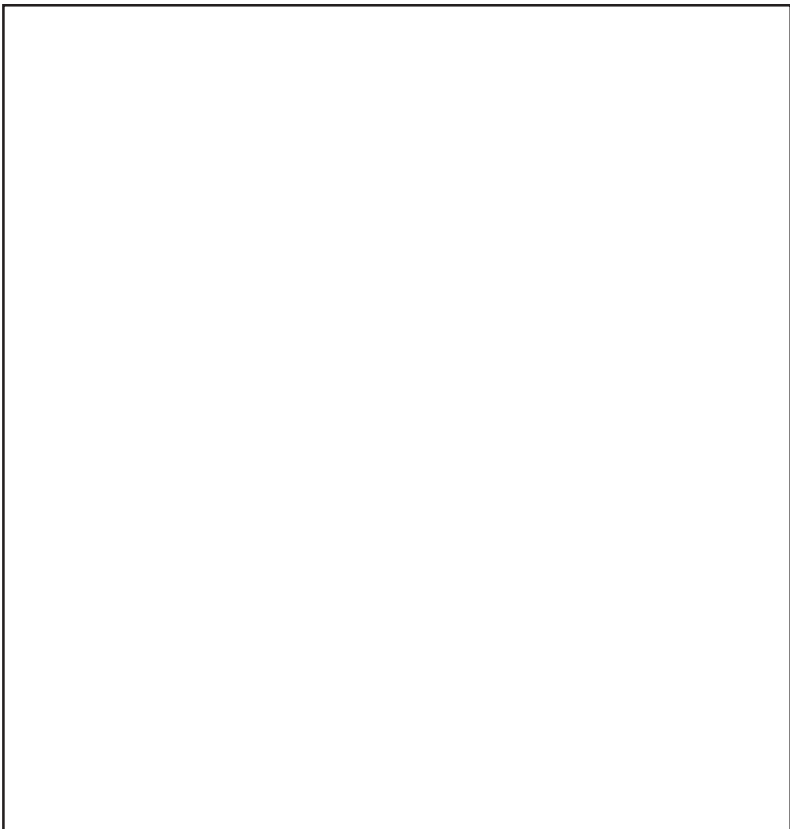
Please help J. Iqbal, a legal Canadian entrant on a **Minister's permit** who became paraplegic in a car accident. By the Grace of God he survived after long hospitalization. The insurance company has exhausted all the specified fund on his treatment.

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



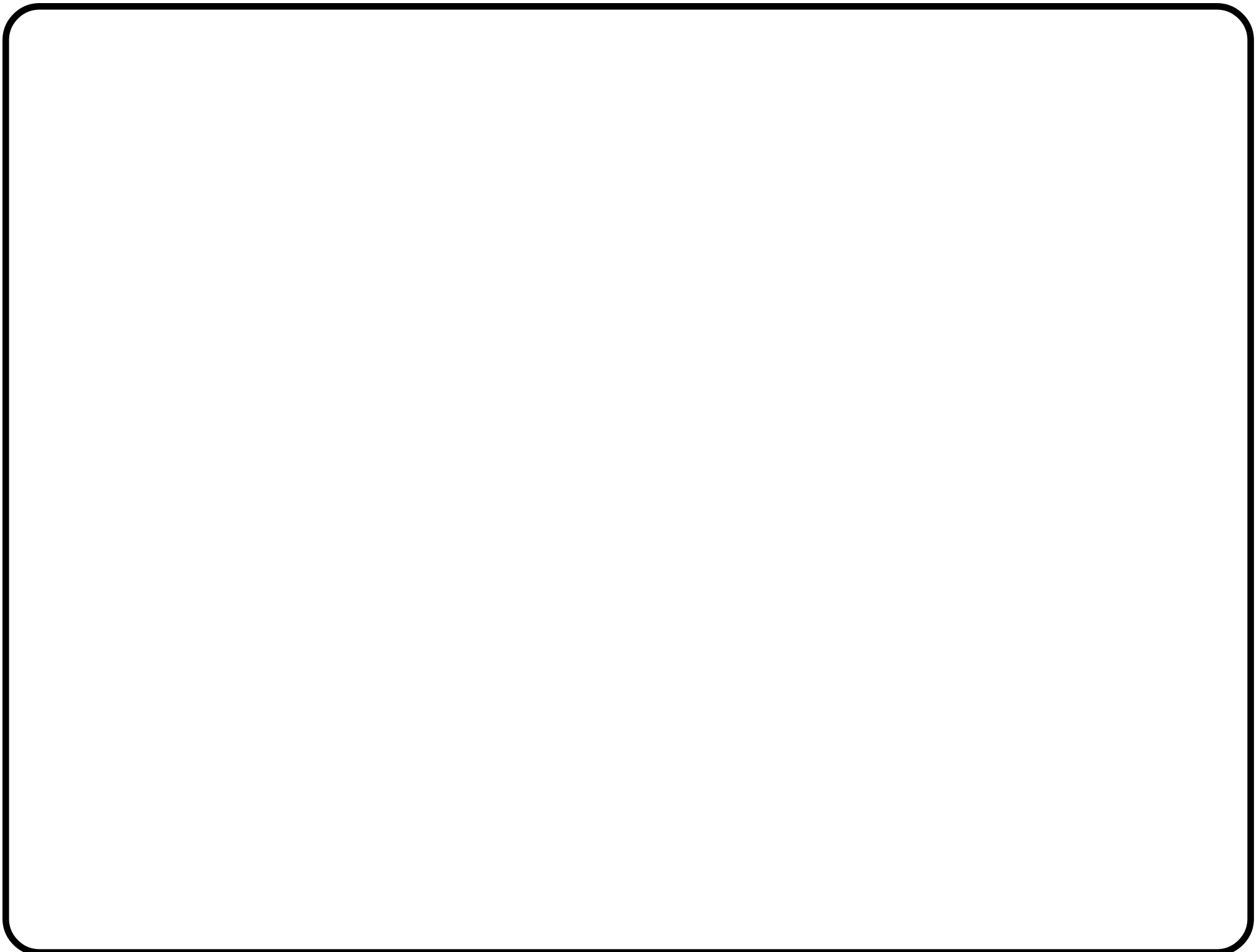
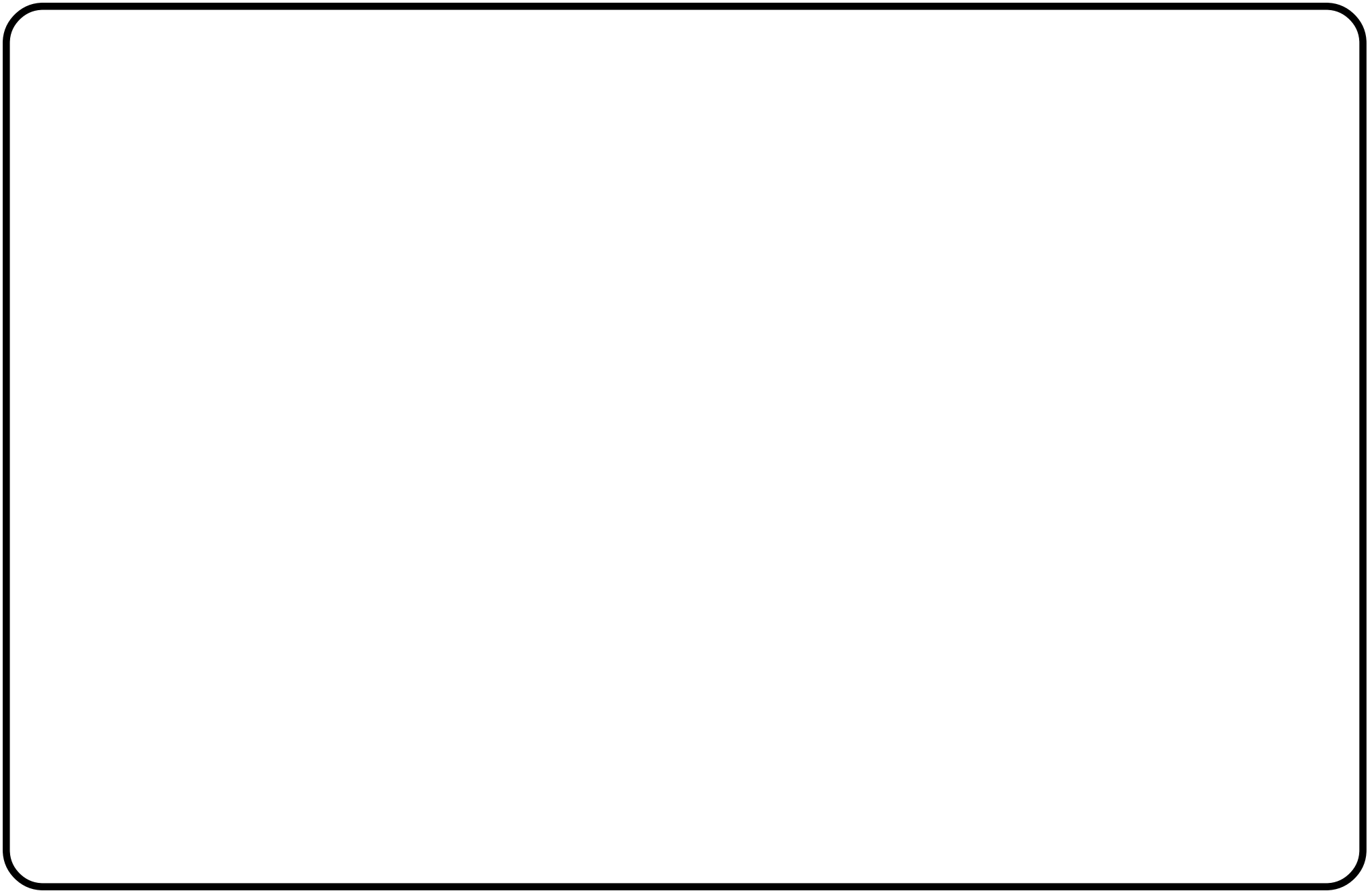
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The Blessed Days of Dhul-Hijjah

Continued from page 1

saying: "What are these people seeking?" (Muslim).

The Day of al-'Ad-haa

The tenth of Dhul-Hijjah is 'Eid-ul-Adhaa or the day of an-Nahr (slaughtering). It marks the conclusion of the major rites of Hajj, and commemorates Allah's bounty on His Messenger Ibrahim (Abraham), when He gave him a ram to sacrifice as ransom for his son Isma'eel (or Ishmael) (pbuh).

"The day of al-Fitr, the day of an-Nahr, and the days of Tashreeq are 'Eid days for us Muslims. They are days of eating and drinking" (Ahmad, an-Nasaa'ee, Saheeh-ul-Jaami' #8192).

The Three Days Following 'Eid ul-'Ad-haa (Tashreeq)

On these days, the pilgrims complete their rites, Muslims continue with their 'Eid celebrations, and are prohibited to fast. "The days of Tashreeq are days of eating, drinking, and mentioning Allah" (Muslim).

The Sacrifice

Allah mentioned the sacrifice together with the first and foremost worship in Islam: prayer. This is a clear indication of its great importance. Thus He ordered His Messenger (pbuh) to offer sacrifices by saying: "Pray unto your Lord and slaughter [your sacrifice]" (Qur'an 109:2).

Ruling

The general consensus of the Muslim scholars is that the sacrifice is an important Sunnah, and a worship called for in the Law of Allah. However, they differ as to whether it is *Nafl* (voluntary) or *Waajib* (mandatory) for those who can afford it. Some scholars have explained the different Ahaadeeth on the subject by stating that the sacrifice is obligatory on those who can afford it and not obligatory on those who cannot.

Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that the Messenger (pbuh) said, "He who has the capacity, and does not sacrifice, may not approach our musallaa (place of prayer) on the 'Eid" (Ibn Maaajah, Ahmad, and others).

Regarding this Hadeeth, Imaam ash-Shaukaanee said: "Prohibiting the one who could afford to sacrifice, but did not do so, from approaching the Musalla indicates that he must have left off a Waajib, as it becomes useless to offer the ['Eid] Salaah (which is Nafl or voluntary) without this Waajib [obligation]" (Nayl ul-Awtaar).

Avoid Cutting Hair or Nails

The one who plans to sacrifice (normally, the head of household) is prohibited to cut his hair or nails from the first of Dhul-Hijjah until he offers the sacrifice. "For the one who has a slaughtering to perform (on) 'Eid then, once the Hilaal (crescent) of Dhul-Hijjah is observed, let him not cut any of his hair or nails until he sacrifices." And in another narration: "Once the ten days start, for those of you who have the intention to sacrifice, let them not cut any of their hair or nails (until they sacrifice)" (Muslim). This prohibition is the opinion of the majority of the scholars of the early generations of Muslims.

Our last call is that all praise are to Allah and may His blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Source: Islaam.com

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

The Last Pilgrimage of The Prophet

Continued from page 1

charged his trust and counseled the Ummah.

7 Order to take rituals of Hajj and other rituals from the Prophet's sayings, actions, and tacit agreements.

8 Subtle indication that the Prophet's farewell would soon come.

9 Warning against fighting and killing among Muslims, which is disbelief in action, although does not take one out of the fold of Islam, as in his saying: "Cursing a Muslim is *fusooq*, and fighting him is *kufir*" (Agreed upon).

Source: Islam.com

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A Different 'Eid

Continued from page 1

attended the event. These measures, like others instituted at airports, arenas, and other public venues throughout the nation after the September 11 terrorist attacks were a sign of the changing times and the deep transformation undertaken by our country since that horrible day. Furthermore, American Muslims had even more reason to be concerned about their safety this 'Eid. In the aftermath of September 11, mosques, Islamic centres, and other Muslim institutions around the country have been the targets of hate-inspired crimes including shootings, arson, and in one case, a car being driven through the front entrance of a mosque. More recently, the arrest of two Jewish Defence League militants plotting a terrorist bombing attack on a Los Angeles area mosque and the offices of a Muslim advocacy group and Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA) have heightened the American Muslim community's concerns about safety and security.

The traditional sermons following the 'Eid prayers this year were also different. Usual upbeat talks were replaced by more sombre, reflective sermons. Prayers were said for the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the loved ones they left behind. More prayers were uttered for the loss of innocent life in Afghanistan, Palestine, Kashmir, and other hotspots around the world. Preachers spoke of their concerns for the erosion of civil liberties in the post-September 11 era, which have hit the American Muslim and Arab-American communities especially hard. Over 1,000 individuals have been detained indefinitely, many without legal representation and most on minor visa violations, with their futures unclear. Three major American Muslim charities were shut down during Ramadan — Holy Land Foundation, Global Relief Foundation, and Benevolence International on vague suspicions of "terrorist" affiliations (which most believe unjustified) but without our government offering credible evidence of any criminal record.

In Southern California, Dr. Muzammil Siddiqui — a renowned

American Muslim scholar and a participant in the National Cathedral prayer ceremony last September — made an impassioned plea for an end to a widespread smear campaign in some quarters of the media directed against American Muslims and their faith. His theme: American Muslims must speak against those who misrepresent our faith, whether they are Muslims who distort the teachings of Islam or others who seek to unfairly tarnish the faith because of the actions of a few.

This 'Eid was also different in a few positive ways. American Muslims are particularly grateful to our nation's Christian community, which has offered overwhelming support to us in these past few months. The Pope's call for Catholics to fast with Muslims on the last Friday of Ramadan stood as a powerful example of this solidarity — one not to be forgotten soon by Muslims worldwide. Here at home, many Christians of differing denominations also "broke bread" with their Muslim neighbours by hosting them for the evening fast-breaking meal of Iftar.

American Muslims are quite appreciative of the support they have received from our Christian neighbours, and we hope to be able to reciprocate with similar displays of generosity and kindness in the near future. Such acts demonstrate that shared spiritual bonds among adherents of different faiths can transcend superficial differences and promote genuine interfaith harmony. Now, we can only pray together that the rest of the world stumbles upon this sim-

Mike Harding Must Work With Muslim Groups

A 46-year-old self-proclaimed Christian pastor must begin performing 340 hours of community service for Muslim organisations as a result of an Ontario court decision to uphold his convictions for hate-mongering.

The Ontario Court of Appeal ruled 3-0 to dismiss Mark Harding's appeal of his 1998 convictions for willfully promoting hatred against Muslims through pamphlets and telephone messages. At his trial, Harding admitted writing and distributing two flyers around Weston Collegiate Institute in 1997 that accused Muslims of practicing a "false religion" full of violence and hatred, and warned of Muslim terrorists living in Canada.

He also recorded a phone message describing Toronto Muslims as no different from those who "torture, maim, starve, beat and kill Christians around the globe in the name of their God." He later said his comments were confined to Muslim fundamentalists.

Madam Justice Karen Weiler said being willfully blind to the effect of the pamphlets and telephone message was virtually the same as willfully promoting hatred.

ple but powerful formula for peace.

Riad Z. Abdelkarim, MD, is Western Region Communications Director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest American Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

Kidz Korner

Let Us Learn Islam, That is Peace

By Asad Latif

Islam instructs its followers to believe in all the prophets whosoever came from Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (may peace be upon them). The stories of Moses and Jesus have been described more frequently than that of the last Prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an, because Islam is a peaceful and unifying faith, and recognizes all prophets and divine books that came before the last Prophet.

While it encourages peaceful co-existence and interaction between diverse communities and interfaith talk, it also instructs its followers not to get involved in quarrels over the differences in faith, and commands that an individual is free to follow his faith, therefore, no one has right to impose his will or faith over others as we are all the creations of the same Creator.

It is a major responsibility of all the believers to practice Islam exactly in accordance with the Qur'an — as a role model to non-believers, so that they may understand the rules and ethics laid down by the Holy Book in their true spirit. At the same time, it is also important that the acts of any individual or group (who might have misconstrued some notions of this peaceful religion) are not mistaken or mislabelled as Islam. That implies that we should honestly engage ourselves to learn in depth the teachings of Qur'an. Any ignorance in this matter may confuse us regarding the teachings of a religion of more than 1.2 billion people around the world. The bottom line is that we have to question one thing: Don't we have the same God? Can different people have different Gods? When I think carefully, I feel that we all have the same God, no matter what colour, cast, country or religion we belong to. Doesn't that mean that we should actively help each other (followers of different faiths) to know Who that same God is, and what He expects from us?

Killing innocent people is not allowed by any religion. Islam also seriously con-

demns killing innocents. Islamic teachings warn us that "if you kill one innocent person, it is like you have killed the entire humanity." On other hand, it is praised that "if you save the life of an innocent person, it is like you have saved the whole humanity." Likewise, we may find many similarities in all the religions, and we may start from there. We should also discuss differences in faith, and that should only increase our knowledge and understanding about various faiths, in no way do we get the license to hate, hurt or make fun of others and their faiths.

Let us see if we may follow a faith that may unify and unite all of us globally praying to the same God of all. But prior to that, we have to keep searching the truth about that Creator while living peacefully and respecting others.

Four Kinds of Hearts

Submitted by Kashif Shaikh

Amru ibn Murra narrated that Huthaifa ibn Yamman, God be pleased with him, said: "There are four kinds of hearts:

1) A veiled heart, and that is the heart of an atheist;

2) A shielded heart, and that is a heart of a hypocrite;

3) A naked heart holding a glowing lamp, and that is the heart of a believer; and,

4) A heart filled with both hypocrisy and faith. The section of faith therein is like that of a tree which is watered with fresh spring water, and the section of hypocrisy is like that of a festering boil filled with puss and infected blood. Whichever of the two abounds and overruns the other at one time or another, the heart will reflect it."

Source: The Beauty of the Righteous & Ranks of the Elite; A Collection of Over 1,000 Rare Accounts of The Blessed Companions of God's Messenger Muhammad (pbuh). Pearl Publishing House, Copyright 1995: pg. 295, Saying 709.

A page from the Life of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

The End of the First Year of Hijrah

The first year of Hijrah marked many important events for the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Muslims of Madinah. The Muhajir (migrants from Makkah) had made the journey from Makkah to Madinah and found comfort and brotherhood with the Ansar (helpers of Islam). The Ansars had welcomed the Muhajirs with open arms and opened their homes to them.

It was in the first year of Hijrah that Masjid-an-Nabi was built. Each Muslim in Madinah, including the Prophet (pbuh) worked day and night to build this house of worship for Allah. The mosque was home not only to the Prophet (pbuh), but also to the Ashab-as-Suffah — the poor Muslims who came from far off places to learn Islam and had no place to stay.

The peace treaty between the Jews and Muslims was also created in the first year of Hijrah. This treaty was to create an atmosphere of peace and cooperation between the two reli-

gions. Jews and Christians, like Muslims, are also People of the Book. However, despite signing a peace treaty, the Jews believed that they were special and did not want to accept the fact that the Arabs could have a Prophet (pbuh) and soon joined forces with the Kuffar of Makkah to destroy Islam.

It was in the first year of Hijrah that the Adhan (prayer call) was first called as a way of gathering all Muslims to pray at a set time in congregation. Prior to this, there was no way of praying together in congregation. People used to make Salah (prayers) in small groups or individually. Because of his strong and clear voice, the Prophet (pbuh) asked Bilal to call the Adhan, thus giving him the title of Mu'adhin — the announcer of the hours of prayer.

The first year of Hijrah also witnessed the death of two people the Prophet (pbuh) was very close to. One was Kulthum bint Hidm — the companion whose home the Prophet (pbuh) had

stayed in while in Quba. The second was Asad ibn Zurara, one of the first six Muslims to be sworn into Islam by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the first of the companions to establish Jumu'ah prayers in Madinah.

Up until the first year of Hijrah, Salah only consisted of two *raka'at* (cycles) but this was increased from 2 to 4 for the afternoon (Zuhr and 'Asr) and night time ('Isha) prayers. People who were traveling were still only required to do two *raka'at* of Salah.

So the first year of Hijrah held many events of significance. The Muhajir and new Muslims of Madinah grew stronger in their faith. Allah had helped them in their journey and they were grateful. The Kuffar of Makkah found another group of people who wanted to destroy the Muslims and made friends with the Jews. Despite this, the Muslims remained confident in Allah and knew that when the time came, He would protect them from their enemies.



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Choose the correct answer:

(Find the answers somewhere else in the paper)

- Asad ibn Zurara was the first companion to establish _____ prayers in Madinah
 - Jumu'ah
 - Zuhr
 - Taraweeh
- The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stayed at this person's home while in Quba:
 - Bilal
 - Abu Ayyub al-Ansari
 - Kulthum bint Hidm
- The number of *raka'at* in the afternoon and night time Salah was changed from 2 to ____
 - 3
 - 5
 - 4
- Adhan was established for this reason
 - So people would know what time it was
 - So that people could come together and pray in congregation
 - Because Allah sent down a revelation
- The poor people who stayed in Masjid-an-Nabi were called the ____
 - Ashab-as-Suffah
 - Mujahir
 - Ansar
- Why did the Jews not want to follow the peace treaty with the Muslims?
 - Because they were forced into signing it
 - Because they did not accept that Arabs could have a Prophet
 - Because they wanted to watch TV instead

5,000 copies of The Ambition have been distributed free of charge at several mosques in and around Metro from as far as Kingston and Oshawa in the east to Brampton, Burlington, Kitchener, and Hamilton in the west. You may also pick up your copy at many Muslim grocery stores.

Muslim Investment 101



Can You Afford To Retire?

by Gemma Salamat, CFP, CHR, CEB,
Financial Advisor

A recent survey conducted by Statistics Canada suggests that a vast majority of Canadians may not have enough funds set aside for a comfortable retirement. This finding was based on 1999 data and focused on four million Canadian families in which the main breadwinner was between the age of 45 and 64.

So, are you among those who fall into this group? And what is enough? The rule of thumb used by financial planners and actuaries is that in retirement you need between 60-70% of your income immediately prior to retirement to maintain an adequate standard of living. This would of course depend on your income and expenses at that time.

Retirement income typically comes from three sources — from the government through Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS), from your employer if you are lucky enough to belong to a company pension or savings plan and from your personal savings and other investments.

Expenditures fall into broad categories of housing, food, clothing, healthcare, transportation, insurance, children and adult education, recreation, gifts and charities and taxes. Retirees' needs are no different from those of working people, except that major expenses for the home and automobiles are proportionately less, while health care, leisure and recreation expenses tend to be more.

According to statistics, Canadians are saving less than ever before. And with life expectancy increasing,

the average Canadian is now expected to live well into their mid-eighties suggesting that savings must last for 20-25 years. Compare this to the early 1950's when people generally lived only a few years after retirement or worked until the very end.

The impacts of a longer life are many and so today's retirees and governments have to grapple with the financial and other realities of aging. Moreover, with government cutbacks, retirees cannot count on government programs to the extent now available and must plan how to stretch their funds to last longer and to preserve purchasing power.

An annual increase of a mere 2.5% is a good measure of increases in price over time. Using this number, in 25 years your dollar would buy only half of what you can purchase today. If this seems hard to believe, you have only to look at history and the cost of a postage stamp. Canadian postage 25 years ago in 1976 was 8 cents. Today it costs 47 cents. So if you live an average lifespan, you would need an annually increasing pension just to cover the basics. Additionally, you must factor in the cost of personal and institutional long-term care should it become necessary.

Governments too have to carefully assess the costs of health care for the elderly and payment of public pensions for decades. Increased spending would mean tax hikes if balanced budgets and debt reduction are to be achieved. This in turn

would create ill will and be counter-productive in other ways.

So what does this mean for you and me? It means that we cannot rely totally on government and must save as much as possible for our golden years. But to save, your net income must be more than you spend. And for many this is difficult, if not impossible, since many of us are newcomers to Canada who must meet major expenditures for homes, furniture and automobiles and acquire "stuff" necessary for comfort and our sense of feeling good. And all of these without the cushion of family who, if they were close, may sometimes lend a helping hand.

Your ultimate Canadian pension income would depend on many factors such as how long you have worked and lived in Canada, did you belong to a company pension and savings plan, and how much savings you accumulate. You should also factor in any other investments or business ventures.

The table below shows how much pension a 40-year-old could expect to receive if retirement is at age 65. Use this to project your situation. It also assumes that the individual now earns \$50,000 annually, has no company pension or savings plan, contributes monthly to a personal RRSP at the rate of 5% of earnings and that future pay and government benefits would increase by 2% annually. Finally, it was assumed that CPP and OAS would continue based on existing laws and that the savings plan would earn a rate of return of

Item	Year 25
Salary of \$50,000 projected to age 65	\$82,000
Estimated Annual Contribution to RRSP at 5%	4,100
RRSP Value at age 65 (assumes 6% annual return)	166,000
Annual Pension from RRSP Savings	9,900
CPP Pension (projected from current level of \$9,300 and assumes full benefit payable)	15,300
Old Age Pension (projected from current level of \$5,200 and assumes full benefit payable)	8,600
Total Annual Pension	\$33,800
Pension as Percentage of Final Pay	41%

6% annually.

The 5% contribution amounts to annual savings of \$2,500 in the first year or just over \$200 a month. But, don't forget the refund from the taxman if you save in an RRSP. Assuming that your marginal tax rate is 35% your net monthly out-of-pocket will be \$135 (5% of \$50,000 multiplied by 65% divided by 12). This is no more than a pack of cigarettes each day or eating out a few times each month.

The question for you is this. If you were this individual would you be able to survive on 41% of what you had previously? If not, you bet-

ter have some contingency plans. Your options would include saving more, retiring later, liquidating other investments, selling or downsizing your home or drastically chopping expenditures.

You and only you can decide how much you need. The first thing for you to do is the number crunching. Then, if you see a shortfall and the numbers scare you, you must establish a plan and take action. Remember that waiting is not an option because you need the years for your savings to accumulate to remedy the situation.

Eid Mubarak

to all our readers and advertisers
from the staff of

The Ambition

May you have a safe and
happy new year

