

The Muslim Observer

News from Around the World

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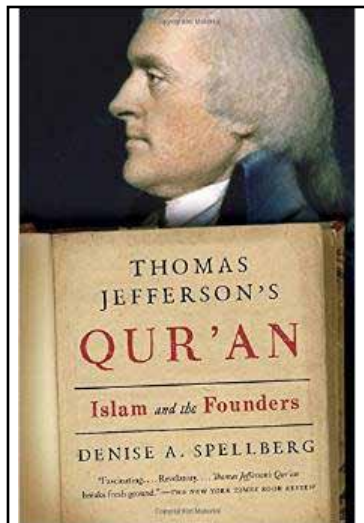
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Book on Jefferson & Islam gets Hamilton Award

University of Texas at Austin History Professor Denise A. Spellberg has been named the \$10,000 grand prize winner of the 2014 University Co-op Robert W. Hamilton Book Awards for her work "Thomas Jefferson's Jefferson, p. 14

New Immigration Laws Lead to New Possibilities

By Laura Fawaz, Contributing Writer, TMO

WASHINGTON — Last week, President Barack Obama issued an executive order, making changes to immigration reform affecting almost five million undocumented immigrants across the country, and clashing with Republicans in the process.

"Today, our immigration system is broken and everybody knows it," President Obama said in his televised address.

Republicans and Congress accused the President of overstepping his powers legally. House Speaker, Rep. John Boehner released a video just before President Obama's televised speech, in which he stated, "The president has said before that 'he's not king' and he's 'not an emperor',

Immigration, p. 22



Pope Francis is shown the Sultan Ahmet mosque, popularly known as the Blue Mosque, by Mufti of Istanbul, Rahmi Yaran, during his visit to Istanbul November 29, 2014. REUTERS-Osservatore Romano

Pope Francis Prays in Istanbul's Blue Mosque

By Philip Pullella and Daren Butler

(Reuters) - Pope Francis prayed silently alongside a senior Islamic cleric in Istanbul's Blue Mosque on Saturday, in a gesture of inter-religious harmony in a

Pope, p. 23

Recognition of Palestinian State: French Parliament Votes for Recognition

By John Irish

(Reuters) - French lawmakers on Tuesday urged their government to recognize Palestine, a symbolic move that will not immediately affect France's diplomatic stance but demonstrates growing European impatience with a stalled peace process.

While most developing countries recognize Palestine as a state, most Western European countries do not, supporting the Israeli and U.S. position that an independent Palestinian state should emerge from negotiations with Israel.

European countries have grown frustrated with Israel, which since the collapse of the latest U.S.-sponsored talks in April has pressed on with build-



Head of the Palestinian Mission in France, Hael Al Fahoum attends a debate on Palestine status at the National Assembly in Paris November 28, 2014. REUTERS/Charles Platiau

ing settlements in territory the Palestinians want for their state.

The motion received the backing of 339 lawmakers with 151 against.

It comes after Sweden became the biggest Western Euro-

pean country to recognize Palestine, and parliaments in Spain, Britain and Ireland held votes in which they backed non-binding resolutions in favor of recognition.

France, p. 20

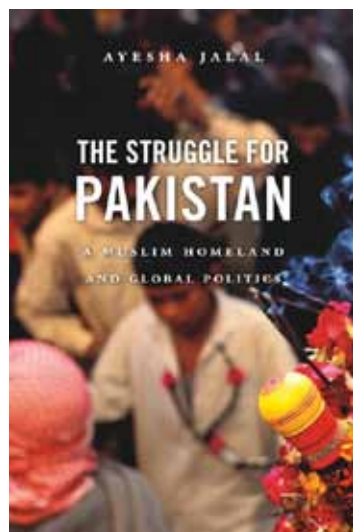
Book Q&A

Ayesha Jalal on 'The Struggle for Pakistan'

By Joseph Richard Preville and Julie Poucher Harbin

Editor's Note: This report originally appeared in ISLAMiCommentary (www.islamiccommentary.org) and is republished here with permission. (ISLAMiCommentary is a public scholarship forum that engages scholars, journalists, policymakers, advocates and artists in their fields of expertise. It is a key component of the Transcultural Islam Project; an initiative managed out of the Duke Islamic Studies Center in partnership with the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations (UNC-Chapel Hill). This article was made possible (in part) by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York.)

Pakistan is a nation with a strong will to survive. It has endured political upheavals, ethnic discord, military dictatorships, and the challenges of religious ex-



tremism. In her new book, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), Ayesha Jalal examines Pakistan's history from its creation in 1947 to the present. "Pakistan's tumultuous history,"

Book, p. 22



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Successful Muslim Women Speakers Summit

By Susan Schwartz, TMO Contributor

Attorney, author, and human rights activist, Soraya Deen, founded and hosted the first Muslim Women Speakers Summit during this past month. The all day event was held in Los Angeles and featured panel discussions with leading Muslim women activists.

The Summit began with the singing of the Star Spangled Banner. After opening comments from Ms Deen, the audience watched a film on the feminist movement in America. This would set the theme of the event - that today more than ever we must promote within our community the themes of social justice and civic engagement.

During the round table discussions that followed the attendees shared who they were without revealing their names or what they did. The workshops were characterized by much laughter and comradery and the attendees expressed disappointment when the event concluded.

The keynote address was given by world renown spiritual activist, Marianne Williamson. Ms Williamson engaged the audience by saying that what we do in the United States impacts people over the entire world. As women, she continued, we have the ability to change the world for the better.

The outstanding panelists included Ani Zonneveld, the founder of Muslims for Progressive Values; Farrah Khan, the Commissioner of the Community Ser-

vices Commission, encouraged women to take part in public service; Maria Khani of the Islamic Institute of Orange County and Senior Chaplain to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, said we must seek to break negative stereotypes, and Dalal Abuzeinyah, the President of the North American Arab Medical Association, said that as Muslims it is mandatory that we be of service.

Marwa Abdulghani invited the group to work with the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) of which she is Outreach Fellow. MPAC, she continued, is moving forward with a progressive agenda and is doing ground breaking work with the involvement and support of the government and the community.

Ms Deen also had segments of dance and movement.

Ms Deen during her address to the audience said that each one of us has gifts and talents, and we must not deny these gifts to the world.

"You have brought powerful women together and you have inspired us" said Tami Shaik, Huffington Post columnist.

The next Muslim Women Speakers Summit will be in San Francisco in February 2015.

To find out more about the Muslim Women Speakers Summit, to contribute, or to host a summit in your community, please access the group's web site at: www.sorayadeen.com.

Egypt Closes Schools in Sinai Towns as Area Inches Toward Open War

By Yusri Mohamed



Smoke rises as a house is blown up during a military operation by Egyptian security forces in the Egyptian city of Rafah, near the border with southern Gaza Strip November 3, 2014. REUTERS/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa

ISMAILIA Egypt (Reuters) - Egypt has indefinitely shut schools in two border towns in northern Sinai as the army prepares to intensify a battle with Islamist militants that turned the daily trip to lessons into a "journey of death".

Local people say children's education has fallen victim while the military stages air strikes against jihadists, who are targeting soldiers and police, and have started beheading army informers.

"We are putting our lives at risk on a daily basis," said Mohamed, a teacher who lives in the town of Sheikh Zuweid. "Sometimes there is fire between gunmen and the armed forces and sometimes stray bullets hit some of us."

Militancy has surged in the Sinai Peninsula, which borders Israel, Gaza and the Suez Canal, since the army ousted an elected Islamist president last summer. At least 33 security personnel were killed last month and one Sinai-based group has pledged its loyalty to Islamic State, which has overrun large areas of Syria and Iraq.

Army checkpoints dot the main roads in northern Sinai which residents fear is turning into an all-out war zone. This made the daily school run arduous, and dangerous if militants targeted the troops manning them. "We've started calling the trip to and from school the journey of death," said another teacher, declining to be named.

Since the militant attacks on Oct. 24, Egypt has imposed emergency rule in parts of Sinai, evicted hundreds of families and demolished their homes to create a buffer zone along the Gaza border about 350 km (220 miles) northeast of Cairo.

The government hopes that by clearing the 1 km-deep area of residents, buildings and trees, it can stem the flow of arms via tunnels from Gaza to the Sinai-based jihadists.

"The buffer zone is a principal part of the solution," President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said in an interview with France 24 television on Thursday. "This should have been done years ago ... There was an understanding with the residents about the need for Egypt's security."

Not everyone agrees with him, and the heavy-handed approach is breeding resentment among local residents who have long complained of neglect by Cairo.

NEAR STANDSTILL

A night time curfew has brought life to a near standstill while extended internet and phone disruptions aimed at breaking the militant's communications also cause problems. Local people say they cannot even call an ambulance to pick up casualties or inform police if they spot militants nearby.

Ten civilians were killed in their home this week

during clashes between the army and militants. Security sources said insurgent mortars hit the house but had earlier raised the possibility of an army air strike gone wrong.

Egyptian officials say extraordinary measures such as the school shutdown are necessary for both national security and residents' safety.

Schools in Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah, both on the border with Gaza, would remain closed while the army secured the surrounding areas, North Sinai governor, General Abdel Fattah Harhour, told state news agency MENA on Thursday.

An army spokesman declined to comment on the military's plans or whether they were related to the school closures. However, security sources said the army was planning major operations in the coming days and did not want children caught in the crossfire.

GHOST TOWN AND GARRISON

With neighboring Libya in chaos and Islamic State trying to establish a cross border "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria, Egypt is determined to regain full control of Sinai. But its battle is growing more complicated.

Last week, five navy seamen were wounded and eight declared missing after what the army called a "terrorist incident" at sea. This was about 50 km (30 miles) from Port Said, the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal which is a major international shipping route and revenue earner for Egypt.

A bomb in a Cairo suburb wounded six people around a police checkpoint on Thursday, security sources said. This was the latest in a string of attacks in the capital whose targets included the supreme court, foreign ministry and Cairo University.

Militants from Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, Egypt's most active jihadist group, have claimed responsibility for beheading a number of Egyptians in recent months they accused of being informants for Israeli intelligence. The group now may be able to boost its funding, recruiting and fighting abilities by vowing loyalty to Islamic State.

Ansar released a slickly-produced video resembling those of Islamic State, appearing to claim responsibility for the Oct. 24 suicide attacks that provoked the Sinai crackdown. This has left rubble where some homes in Rafah once stood.

"Rafah has become a ghost town by night and military garrison by day," said Salem al-Araishi, a resident. "All our memories are gone with our houses."

(Additional reporting by Omar Fahmy and Shadi Bushra; Writing by Shadi Bushra, Editing by Lin Noueihed and David Stamp)

Marriage Support

Hidaya Foundation supports impoverished families who are trying to get their daughters married by providing basic items necessary for newlywed girls, including dresses, shoes, utensils, bedding, fans, sewing machines, and more, along with some financial assistance to offset marriage expenses. Depending on the region, it costs approximately \$200 to \$300 to support the marriage of one young woman.

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Looking for Hereos Where None Exist

Editor's note: Originally published in Aijaz Zaka Syed, Big Story, Insight. Republished in TMO by permission. The opinions of Aijaz Zaka Syed are his own.

It's a bleak landscape across the Muslim world. In the face of gathering storm and darkening shadows, it is business as usual with relentless plots, counterplots against each other

By Aijaz Zaka Syed

In a tribute to the inimitable Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on his 10th death anniversary, veteran Palestinian journalist and analyst Abdel Bari Atwan lamented the fact that the Palestinians today cannot claim a leader of Arafat's stature, his charisma and vision, and above all, his commitment to the cause.

In his Gulf News piece, Atwan writes: "With every passing year since we lost Yasser Arafat, the lack of a powerful, charismatic Palestinian leader stands in ever sharper relief and compounds the nation's misfortune. Under Arafat's watch, the Palestinian cause was constantly under the global media spotlight and we Palestinians were perceived by the rest of the world as wronged, proud and tough."

"Arafat was a great individual and a charismatic personality. He understood the power of his own image; his trademark outfit of camouflage jacket and keffiyah told the world, and his own people, that he was a warrior and a nationalist. He had only one real ambition in life: To liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation."

Referring to the heightened tensions and recent attempts by the Zionist extremists to target Al Aqsa, Islam's third holiest mosque, Atwan notes: "Unlike Abbas, Arafat would never have accepted last week's storming of

Al Aqsa Mosque by Israeli colonists, backed by police, without a fight. Nor would he have passively watched Israel's illegal colonies mushroom to the extent that they now house 700,000 Jewish colonists on Arab land."

The observations by Atwan, one of the first journalists to interview Osama Bin Laden before he turned into a fearsome legend, reminded me of the words of Palestinian scholar, Dr Mahdi Abdul Hadi, who had complained with some bitterness some years ago that Palestinians have no leaders; only representatives!

But then this is not a problem exclusive to the Palestinians although given their peculiar predicament and never-ending suffering, they feel and pay for the leadership vacuum more than others. Indeed, this is the fate of the whole of Arab and Islamic world.

Of course, there is no dearth of politicians, intellectuals and scholars in our midst. But true leadership and integrity and an ability to look ahead and guide in times of crisis is something that is increasingly hard to come by. Heroes like Arafat are even rarer.

Even in the face of great adversity and threats to collective existence, if you cannot speak in one voice, let alone join hands to confront the dangers staring us in the face, there's something seriously wrong with us.

Look at the Islamic world today. It presents the picture of a house hopelessly divided and broken into many parts. While the goal of glorious unity of the Ummah has long remained elusive, never in its history has it fought so many firestorms all at the same time.

As though long years of economic and political exploitation and machinations by world powers, coupled with the self-serving



A Palestinian boy holds a picture of late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat during a ceremony marking the 10th anniversary of his death, in the West Bank village of Al-Yamoun, Nov. 10, 2014. AP photo

timidity and corruption of our own, weren't enough, in the casual savagery of groups like Daesh and Boko Haram and a million sectarian and tribal conflicts, we are now faced with a challenge never before seen in Islamic history. Compared with the deadly ways of the Daesh, Al-Qaeda looks almost Gandhian in its approach.

Not a day passes without some spine-chilling execution, suicide bombing or some such abomination, making all Muslims cringe in shame and withdraw into their collective shell. Our scholars of course dutifully condemn the violence, rejecting it as 'un-Islamic' and "against the teachings of the faith." But who cares? As far as the world is concerned, these denunciations are not worth the paper they are printed on.

Meanwhile, the tentacles of the empire continue to grow far and wide and deep into the heart of the Islamic world. On the sidelines, Israel is busy expanding its own little evil empire. The battle

for global control and resources proceeds apace uninterrupted under one pretext or another—in the name of avenging 9/11 attacks, finding Saddam's legendary weapons and now fighting the ISIS. Which, it becomes increasingly clear, is nothing but a monster of the West's own making.

If our elites are alive to the deepening shadows and noise of sharpening knives, they are yet to show it. In the face of gathering storm, it is business as usual with relentless plots, counterplots against each other.

The Arabs are pitted against fellow Arabs. The Sunnis are ranged against Shias and Islamists against secular militants and Baathists. Iran, Assad and Hezbollah seemingly belong in one camp. Hezbollah which bravely fought Israeli aggression doesn't see anything odd in fighting those confronting the Baathist tyranny.

Turkey and Iran, on the one hand, and Turkey and Arabs on the other cannot see eye to eye on a host of issues, from the Mus-

lim Brotherhood to Hamas. The Turks and Kurds are facing each other even as they all take on the ISIS. There are turf battles going on even within the Gulf Cooperation Council grouping.

Next door, it is routine for Iran and Pakistan to exchange fireworks and casualties from time to time along their long border. On the other hand, Pakistan and Afghanistan accuse each other of conspiracies and sponsoring terror. The so-called Ummah bleeds from a million wounds.

And it's not just the ruling elites and political and military establishments that are engaged in these low-intensity, debilitating battles for geopolitical clout; their media, intellectuals, public figures are all expending all their energy battling it out in open. My friend Ramzy Baroud did a fine piece last week lamenting the state of Arab media.

In the words of Naipaul, it is a million mutinies among the believers. And with so many wars to

Heroes, p. 14

A Community Voices Support For Their Imam

By Laura Fawaz, Contributing Writer, TMO

Dearborn, MI – "Imam Qazwini has done his part in our lives, it's time to do ours! Please join us Friday after Thanksgiving in supporting our Imam, supporting Unity."

This message is an excerpt from a mass e-mail campaign sent out to all who have been inspired by Imam Sayed Hassan Al-Qazwini, the Imam of the Islamic Center of America, in Dearborn, Michigan. The campaign was created by a group of Qazwini's supporters in response to letters circulating in the community, which they say include false accusations against their beloved spiritual leader.

The letters, which are being sent to people's homes via U.S. mail, are from an unidentified group calling themselves The Muslim Youth of Dearborn.

Among other things, the letters accuse the Imam of misusing masjid funds.

The Young Muslim Association (YMA), a group which Imam Qazwini founded, responded to clarify that this group is in no way affiliated with them, or the Islamic Center. "We perceive these letters as an unwarranted attack on Imam Sayed Hassan Qazwini, The Young Muslim Association, and the community at large," they said in a statement. "We stand in full support of Imam Qazwini and are forever indebted to him for all that he has done for our community in his 18 years of service," the statement said.

As founder of the Young Muslim Association (YMA), Imam Qazwini has influenced many young American Muslims,

helping to spiritually guide them in daily living, and even creating an annual retreat to emphasize learning about their faith. After such an experience, many who attended these retreats began to wear hijab permanently.

"Imam Qazwini really understands the American Muslim mentality. Without him, his understanding and guidance, I don't believe that the young Muslims of the community would be as advanced Islamically as we are," said Hussein Beydoun who joined Imam Qazwini for Hajj in 2012.

Last Friday, over a thousand community members from cities across Metro-Detroit gathered at the Islamic Center. With the women on one side, and the men on the other, they all joined hands, circling the prayer hall.



Imam Sayed Hassan Al-Qazwini

Photo by Adil James

Wearing signs around their necks and chests that read "We Stand In Dignity," "Protect The ICA," and "Our Community, Our Voice,"

the community voiced support for their Imam.

Reflections of an American Muslim Mother on Ferguson



Protesters take part in a protest over the shooting death of Michael Brown in Webster Grove, Missouri, December 2, 2014. Police officer Darren Wilson fatally shot Brown during an August 9 confrontation in Ferguson, Missouri, about 12 miles outside St. Louis, which set off a national debate on race and policing. REUTERS/Jim Young

Editor's Note: Linda Sarsour is the Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York. This commentary originally appeared on Ummah-Wide.com and is amended and reprinted here with permission. The opinions expressed here are solely those of the author.

I do not come as a preacher. I come to you as a mother of a 16-year-old boy. I come to you as a Muslim, as a New Yorker. More importantly I come to you as a human. I also come angry and frustrated. I went to Ferguson. Ferguson taught me that it is okay to be angry. That anger is not something we should be ashamed of when we are working against injustice.

Injustice, sisters and brothers, is supposed to make us angry. It reminds us of our humanity. And that anger can be translated into systemic change. I was proud to be angry—which is something we are told not to be. But in Ferguson it felt good to be angry and we were alongside people who were angry but showed us so much LOVE. It was something I never felt before in my life.

Sisters and brothers, I ask of you today to focus on the real injustices. Don't condemn and chastise those that chose to channel their anger in ways you deem unproductive. Pray for them. Love them. We may not condone their actions but I am not ready to discard them, disassociate with them—society has already done that to them. Ask more questions, what must happen to a human being for them to behave in certain ways?

What examples of Black American non-violent heroes has our country produced for them? Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr, Reverend George Lee, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X in his later years—what do they all have in common—MURDERED.

They called for non-violence, they marched, they organized their people and they were shot. Understand history—Black American history is your history. American History is your history and it hasn't always been a history you can be proud of. Pastor Willie from First Corinthian Baptist Church in New York City broke it down. He said America was born with a birth defect. We have never truly dealt with it so it continues to be there. I will add that because we haven't dealt with it we have exported this birth defect to other lands where we kill innocent people in the thousands through unjust wars or target civilians some of whom are Americans, through our drone policies.

This, sisters and brothers, is not just about Michael Brown.

This is about black men/boys/women/girls across the country including right here in our own backyard. Akai Gurley, Ramarley Graham, Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Kimani Gray, Eric Garner, Tim Stansbury, Mohamed Bah, Nicholas Heyward, Jr., and the list goes on and on. This is about police officers who walk free as if the people they murdered were cattle in the street. This is not just about police violence. This is about an education system that is set up to fail children of color. An education system that has been called a monopoly. An education system in which it's quality is based on the neighborhood you live in. It is about a justice system that takes you in as a young person, follows you around as an adult, and stunts your progress. You can't get away from it. It is about lack of oppor-

tunity. It is about a system that doesn't believe in your potential and operates that way.

Let us come to a place where we recognize that there is structural racism in our country and that we all do not have to experience it to believe it exists. It exists. Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid, prominent Black American Imam and mentor said that generally speaking, immigrant Muslims had it good in America, benefiting from artificial white privilege prior to 9/11. However, on 9/11 and in the years following, they realized they were just another n**ger. This may be a hard statement for folks to swallow. Reflect. Breathe.

We have Muslim brothers and sisters withering away in "Communication Management Units" in places like Indiana - many of whom were convicted on "secret evidence" or under the ambiguous "material support" laws - stripped of every right they have. Some have never had trouble with the law up until that dreaded day. They never were a harm to our society, and yet they languish in small cells for 23 hours a day. Muslims make up over 85% of the CMUs and we are less than 1% of the population. Who marches for them? Is the system working for them and their families?

Don't tell me about a justice system that doesn't work in the same way for everyone - a justice system that protects celebrities and law enforcement and too often turns its back on the ordinary person.

Racism is REAL. It doesn't have to be REAL for you for it to be REAL.

Don't treat everything as an isolated incident or case. Use your intellect. Analyze. Ask ques-

tions. The justice system isn't a robot or a calculator that always gives the right answers. The justice system is made up of people. People sometimes make mistakes. Humans make mistakes. We all make mistakes.

For some of you it is a story of one unarmed black boy shot on the streets of Ferguson. For others it's one small drop in an ocean of dehumanization, discrimination, demoralization that has been passed on from one generation to the next. For some—this is what it is. Some have given up.

I am exhausted hearing people say we are all playing the race card.

Sisters and brothers, these are the cards the system has dealt. Trust me, if we are dealt a new set - a set with equality, justice, liberty and pursuit for happiness for all, a set that values all human life the same, a set that sees the potential in all of our children - we'll gladly accept it and play those cards.

I am not asking you to feel sympathy for black and brown people, they definitely don't want your sympathy, I just want you to believe in your hearts that "black lives matter" and stop expecting black and brown people to prove their humanity to you. They are exhausted. Reverend Chloe Breyer, a White Episcopalian priest said what makes her aware of her white privilege is that she doesn't feel exhausted. She sleeps well at night. That, sisters and brothers, is courage and honesty - acknowledging one's privilege and using it to help uplift others.

By no means should anyone feel guilty about his or her privilege. I have plenty, but I cannot, in good conscience, walk around

in this world with the fallacy that we live in an equitable and just world just because that's how it's working out for me. I ask for some selflessness for a moment. Just imagine for one minute that Michael Brown was your son, in all his complexities and all his simplicities, and the system didn't think your child was worth a trial. It was never about guilty or innocent for Darren Wilson—it was about his day in court. The system didn't think it was worth their time. Would you have sat back with the memory of your slain child and took it? Unless you experience the murder of your child in this same vein—you again are speaking from a place of privilege and I will continue to say, "check it".

If we do not see ourselves in each other or believe that we each deserve freedom and equality and are all brothers and sisters and all the children of God, then it is we that are failing our children, our future, and all of humanity.

This is not about Black and White. This is not about us vs. law enforcement. I am not anti-law enforcement. I am anti-law enforcement misconduct, and we should all be against misconduct wherever it is happening.

I find it interesting that people will support the plight of Palestinians or Syrians or Egyptians by encouraging them to resist by any means necessary, yet they won't afford that right to others. My choice is to recommit to working for justice for all. I am keeping my eyes on Ferguson, my heart in the movement, and my feet on the streets of New York City because Ferguson is everywhere.

I hope you will join me.



Linda Sarsour Marches in Ferguson, Missouri as a part of the #FergusonOctober protests

The Innocent Souls and Self-Serving Religious Clergy



Dr. Aslam Abdullah

By Dr. Aslam Abdullah, TMO Editor in Chief

Don't view the title as an indictment of religious clergy. The article refers to only those who misuse their religious authority to serve their political, sectarian or financial interests. One does not have to name them. You can discover them when you meet them. Their level of intolerance will expose them to you.

A number of young Muslims in the age group of 16 to 20s are joining ISIS ranks to fight for what they claim an Islamic state. They are putting their lives at stake and fearing no consequences they are joining the ranks of those who call them Mujahideen, a group that in Islamic theology is said to be blessed by the divine. They are ready to die to be known as martyrs to achieve the highest status with the Creator in the jannah or paradise that He has created for pious and virtuous people.

But does the path to jannah have to be strewn with the human blood and bones? Is Allah so violent that he grants jannah or paradise only to those who kill others in his name. One of the leaders of an Islamic Parties in Pakistan, perhaps, believes so. This ideology is the product of a culture that does not know how to handle opposition effectively and that seeks death for everyone opposed to the killer.

Islam does not promote it and the Prophet (s) did not advocate that. But our youth, in the name of Allah and His Messenger (s), are forced to take this path by a clergy and a religious leadership that has violated every principle of the Quran. That does not mean that every member of the religious leadership is guilty. But what it implies is that if those who claim to be religious leaders do not take up a stand, the nihilistic ideology would become widespread and cause damage to the community immensely.

Our youth are most vulnerable to this ideology.

They are told that God will be pleased if they grow an untrimmed beard visible from behind their shoulder and many blindly follow the dictates.

They are told that it is useless to pursue this world and they

withdraw from it.

They are told that everyone other than those who believe in their faith are profane and they accept it.

They are told the entire world is conspiring against them and they believe it.

They are told that in order to rid the world from impurity, they may have to use violence, and some show readiness to do that.

They are reminded day in and day out that unless they establish the word of God on earth, he would not be pleased and in order to do that they have to offer

their lives and they come forward to offer their lives readily.

They are told that their scholars who lived some 1000 years ago have done all that needs to be done to understand their faith, and they should simply follow them without and questioning and they heed to the advise.

They are told that the Quran is a book to be read only in Arabic without the ability to understand its meanings and they believe in this.

They are told that even if they do not have Arabic as their language they must marvel at its linguistic beauty without under-

standing it and they accept it.

They are told if a Muslim changes his faith, he is a sinner and he has no right to be alive and they theologically accept it.

They are told theirs is the best religion and the best community and the rest are filthy, deviant and fodder for hellfire and they all rejoice it.

They are told that men are superior and the purpose of the creation of women is to serve men in every possible way and they accept it.

They are told that women
Clergy, p. 20



A displaced boy, who fled from Islamic State violence in Mosul, stands in refugee camp on the outskirts of the Kurdish city of Arbil, December 1, 2014. They used to be symbols of an oil-fuelled boom, but the unfinished buildings in Iraq's Kurdish north are now crammed with people fleeing violence in the rest of the country. Of the two million people displaced by Islamic State offensives in Iraq this year, almost half sought refuge in Kurdistan, inflating the semi-autonomous region's population by around 20 percent and putting acute strain on its resources. REUTERS/ Azad Lashkari

CARTOON OF THE WEEK



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Security staff pushes journalists back as a meeting of OPEC oil ministers is due to begin at OPEC's headquarters in Vienna November 27, 2014. Gulf oil producers led by Saudi Arabia are expected to press the case on Thursday for not yet cutting OPEC output, despite calls from some members of the group to bolster sagging prices by removing surplus crude from the market. REUTERS/Heinz-Peter Bader

Saudi Set for Tighter 2015 Budget After Oil Price Falls

By Martin Dokoupil

DUBAI, Dec 2 (Reuters) - Plunging oil prices could mean the first budget cuts for major exporter Saudi Arabia since 2002 but they are not expected to be large enough to stop growth in the Arab world's biggest economy.

The government gets about 90 percent of its revenue from oil exports and is believed to need an average oil price above \$90 to balance its budget this year.

But Brent crude fell to \$67 a barrel this week from \$115 in June and if current prices are sus-

tained, the budget plan for next year, expected late this month, will produce a deficit for the first time since 2009.

"There is no way for Saudi authorities to announce a bigger budget in 2015 than what they announced for 2014," said John Sfakianakis, a former adviser to the Saudi finance ministry who is now regional director of asset manager Ashmore in Riyadh.

"Unavoidably they will have to scale down the budget. (But) I do not expect the budget to be hugely lower."

As recently as last month, the International Monetary Fund predicted Saudi Arabia would enjoy a fiscal surplus of 1.6 percent of gross domestic product in 2015; now, private economists are talking of a deficit of over 1 percent.

But businessmen and economists do not expect big cuts in state spending because the government has built huge fiscal reserves to cover any deficit and its ultra-low debt levels would allow it to borrow easily if needed.

This means the economy, which grew an annual 3.8 per-

****Currency Exchange:**
One US dollar = _____:

Algerian Dinar	84.1
Bahraini Dinar	.364
Bangladesh Taka	75.4
British Pound	.64
Brunei Dollar	1.27
Canadian Dollar	1.1
Egyptian Pound	7.0
EU Euro	.80
Indian Rupee	61.5
Indonesian Rupiah (1,000)	12,195
Iranian Riyal (1,000)	26,758
Jordanian Dinar	.70
Kuwaiti Dinar	.29
Lebanese Pound (1,000)	1,472
Malaysian Ringgit	3.35
Moroccan Dirham	8.59
Omani Rial	.38
Pakistani Rupee	99.7
Qatari Riyal	3.64
Saudi Arabian Riyal	3.75
Singapore Dollar	1.30
Sudanese Dinar (1,000)	561.9
Tunisian Dinar	1.82
U.A.E. Dirham	3.67
Yemen (1,000)	214.8

Source: Oanda.com
Updated Monday
The above rate varies minute by minute and day by day and depends upon bank commissions and varies from one bank to another.

cent in the second quarter, should continue to expand and major infrastructure projects, such as the \$22.5 billion plan to build a metro rail system in Riyadh by 2019, should not be at risk.

Some analysts believe Saudi Arabia is content to see oil prices fall as a way to squeeze out competing shale oil producers in the United States, confident it has enough reserves to ride out a period of cheap oil.

BUDGET PLAN

Even before oil started falling in June, Saudi Arabia was curbing spending growth after several years of spectacular increases following the global financial crisis and the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

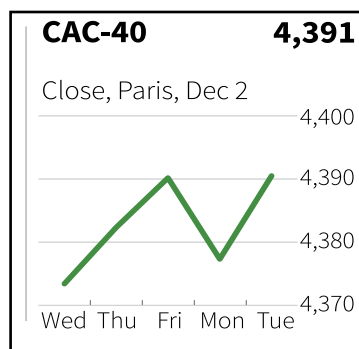
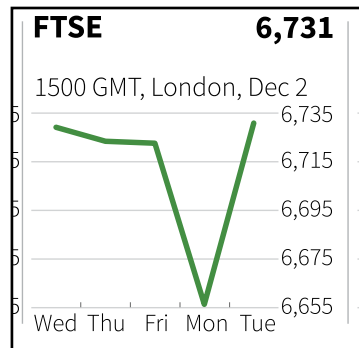
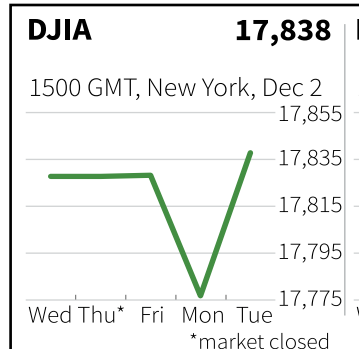
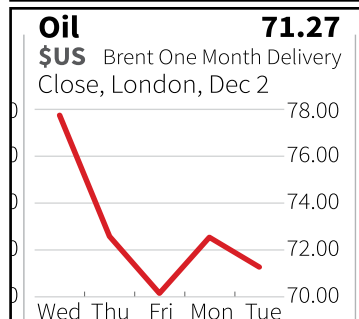
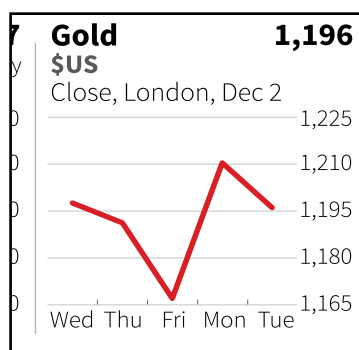
The current year's budget plan envisages expenditure of 855 billion riyals (\$227.8 billion), a mere 4.3 percent rise from the 2013 plan and the slowest increase in a decade.

Top Saudi officials have been coy about their 2015 plans.

"The global oil situation usually in one way or another affects countries' revenues and debts, but the kingdom has always been keen on building its budgets on estimates that take all possibilities into consideration," Finance Minister Ibrahim Alassaf told a local newspaper last month.

The government usually ends up spending substantially more than its budget plan, overspending by an annual average of 25 percent in 2004-2013. So the 2015 plan could quickly change if oil prices rebound.

It seems clear, however, that the government will not be under pressure to reduce spending



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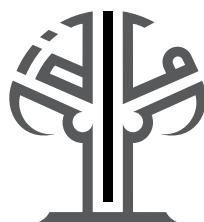
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World's Biggest Pilgrimage That You've Never Heard of

By Laura Fawaz, TMO Contributing Reporter

Editor's note: Laura Fawaz is a TMO contributor. Her opinions are her own.

It's not the Islamic Pilgrimage of Haj, or the followers of Judaism visiting the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, or the mass Hindu Pilgrimage of Kumbh Mela. Rather, it's the visitation on the day known as the Arbaeen.

This is the world's most populous gathering, and odds are, you've probably never heard of it. Even with the number of visitors vastly exceeding the number of those to Mecca, by more than five times as much. This commemoration of Arbaeen trumps every other rally on the planet, reaching 20 million last year. That would be a staggering 60% of Iraq's entire population. Not to mention those coming from different parts of the world such as America, Pakistan, Australia, Lebanon and many others, and it's growing year after year. The visitation done on the day of Arbaeen is to the Islamic shrines in the city of Karbala, the place where Imam Hussain (AS), among others, are buried. Hussain is the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (s), is revered by Muslims as the "Prince of Martyrs."

He was killed in Karbala on a day that became known as Ashura, which is on the tenth day of the Islamic month of Muharram. The Imam, his family members, and their companions were all martyred there on the day of Ashura over 1400 years ago for refusing to pledge allegiance a leadership they saw as corrupt. These martyrs were surrounded in the desert by an army of 30,000 people, and starved of food and water. This graphic tale is recounted from pulpits around the world every year since the day he was slain. In the words of the English historian Edward Gibbon: "In a distant age and climate, the tragic scene of the death of Hussain will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader."

Followers of Hussain (as) have since mourned his death, in particular the 10 days of Ashura, and then, forty days later, the Arbaeen. Forty days is the usual length of mourning in many Muslim traditions. Every year, their followers gather to commemorate this sacrifice. Though above all, the visitation on the Arbaeen is unique because of the surrounding and historical political situations. From 1964 to 2003, the tyrant Saddam Hussain ran the country of Iraq. He instructed his regime not to allow anyone to visit the shrines in Karbala in anyway. Those who would try to go knew they were risking their lives doing so. Still, they would run towards the opportunity to visit these Islamic personalities as they are known to give healing benefits to anyone who goes there asking of their needs; for anyone,

Shia or not, Muslim or not.

Saddam would have his snipers hiding by these shrines to shoot and kill anyone that would attempt to go inside. Since Saddam has been ousted over a decade over, the shrines have all been remodeled with several sets of guards of every entrance. Though still on this beautifully redecorated marble walls are reminders of the past. There are a few small squares on each of the four walls surrounding the shrine, the grave site, that are desecrated with bullet holes, the same bullets used to try to murder the pilgrims of these shrines.

Currently, the political situation takes place amongst chaos, violence, dangerous geographic routes, and many 'differences of opinions' when it comes to politics. Daesh, or ISIS ('Islamic State' of Iraq and Syria) sees the Shia as their mortal enemy. So of course nothing is more infuriating to the terror group more than the sight of Shia pilgrims gathering for their greatest show of faith. Since the fall of Saddam, pilgrims from all-over the world have made the journey to Karbala year-round, with the number of visitors growing every year. And I say pilgrims, not Shia because it is not just the Shia that makes this visitation. Yes it is a distinctively Shia spiritual exercise, though Sunnis, Christians, Yazidis, Zoroastrians, and Sabians partake in the pilgrimage, knowing of its healing benefits.

The reason this pilgrimage and the high amount of visitors is not often heard of is because instead, the media coverage is more geared towards the negative, bloody, gory details of that region. More often than not, we don't hear about the positive, inspiring narratives, particularly when it comes to Islam. The same level of airtime is awarded to a pro-democracy march in Hong Kong or an anti-Putin rally in Russia. But a gathering of 20 million people who rally against terror and injustice, somehow fails even to make it even to the TV news ticker.

Last spring, I travelled to Karbala to perform this visitation, this pilgrimage, and to find out for myself what it is about this city that once you visit it, your heart is forever enthralled with this love of Hussain (as). I found that after just one visit, the pilgrims have an attachment to these people who sacrificed their lives for Islam, and to the tragedy, the story of Karbala. They are endlessly eager to return.

The distance from the most southern point of Iraq is the city of Basra. From there to Karbala it is 425 miles, a long journey by car, but unimaginable to walk. It takes pilgrims a full two weeks to complete this walk, and people of all age groups do it. They travel



A Pakistani Shi'ite Muslim girl kisses a religious motif of sword and shield during procession to commemorate Ashoura in Rawalpindi November 4, 2014. Ashoura, which falls on the 10th day of the Islamic month of Muharram, commemorates the death of Imam Hussein, grandson of Prophet Mohammad, who was killed in the seventh century battle of Kerbala. REUTERS/Faisal Mahmood



Muslim Shi'ite women light candles to commemorate Ashoura in Kerbala, southwest of Baghdad November 4, 2014. A gathering of millions of Shi'ite Muslims at shrines and mosques across Iraq for the Ashoura religious commemoration passed without any major attacks on Tuesday, under tight security imposed for fear of Islamic State bombers. REUTERS/Ahmed Saad

across rough terrain, down uneven roads, dangerous marshlands and through terrorist strongholds. A large aspect of this pilgrimage is gaining good deeds and rewards from God by providing for those making the journey to visit Hussain, the grandson of His Prophet (s).

On this path is the sight of thousands of tents with makeshift kitchens set up by local villagers. The tents are places where pilgrims get practically everything they need, from fresh meals, to a space to rest, to baby diapers, to free international phone calls to assure concerned relatives, all free of charge. Consider this ratio, after the earthquake in Haiti,

the UN World Food Program delivered half a million meals at the height of its relief efforts. The United States military launched Operation Unified Response, bringing together the massive resources of various federal agencies, announcing that within five months of the humanitarian catastrophe, 4.9 million meals had been delivered to the Haitians. Compare that with over 50 million meals per day during the Arbaeen, equating to about 700 million meals for the duration of the pilgrimage, all financed not by the United Nations or international charities, but by poor laborers and farmers who starve to feed the pilgrims and save up all year

round so that visitors are satisfied.

It isn't easy to fully understand what inspires these pilgrims until you join them. You'll see women carrying mentally disabled children in their arms, old men in wheelchairs, new parents taking their infant babies for blessings, people on crutches, and blind seniors holding walking sticks. The first thing that pilgrims do upon reaching his shrine is recite the Ziyara, a sacred text which summarizes the status of Hussain. In it, they begin the address by calling Hussain the "inheritor" of prophets Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them all.

COMMUNITY NEWS - NORTH AMERICA

Asma Hanif named Raven's Community Quarterback award winner

The Baltimore Ravens have selected Asma Hanif as one of the three 2014 Community Quarterback Award recipients. Funded by NFL Charities and the Ravens Foundation, Inc., the Community Quarterback Award recognizes individuals who exhibit leadership, dedication and commitment to bettering their local communities.

Since its inception in 1987, Muslimat Al-Nisaa continues to offer a holistic approach to serving marginalized communities of Baltimore. Its mission is to provide health, education, shelter and other social services to the underserved population in general, and to Muslim women and children in particular. The organization is based on the principle that every woman, man and child has a right to receive quality care regardless of race, creed or socioeconomic status.

As a result of her work as an advanced nurse practitioner, Hanif witnessed religious discrimination while treating sexual assault and domestic violence cases in the female Muslim population of Baltimore. In 2007, she began opening her home to help these women and their children. Her home has been converted into a shelter and has grown over the past seven years to include job training and educational programs for shelter residents, feeding the homeless on the streets through their "Chili Bowl Sunday" program, as well as providing free physicals to those individuals wishing to participate in the Special Olympics.

For her continued dedication, Hanif was invited to be a panelist on and is still a current member of the Governor of Maryland's Domestic Violence Community Initiative. In January, she was invited to speak at the United States Attorney Office's "Protecting Our Diversity" forum on violence and

Compiled by Mohammed Ayub Khan, international@muslimobserver.com

hate crimes.

Family of university shooting victim seeks help

Tragedy can strike anyone and anywhere. Friends of one of three Florida State University students shot by an alumnus at the main campus library have created an online fundraising account to help his family pay for medical expenses and long-term care, according to Local 10 TV news.

Farhan Ahmed, 21, was one of three students wounded after Myron May opened fire at the Robert Manning Stroz Library on Nov.20.

Friends said Ahmed, whom they call "Ronny," was shot three times and remains in the intensive care unit at a Tallahassee hospital. They said he was paralyzed from the waist down and isn't expected to walk again.

To help with his recovery, his friends created a YouCaring.com account. The goal is to raise \$100,000.

Dr. Mustafa Ahmed, Zabeer Brothers get Spirit of Gainesville Awards

Dr. Mustafa Ahmed and the Zabeer brothers received the Spirit of Gainesville Awards hosted by the Gainesville Sun in the medicine and youth categories respectively.

Dr. Mustafa Ahmed, a UF Health cardiologist and transplant specialist, and a group of Muslim health care providers founded the RAHMA Mercy Clinic to counter the propaganda unleashed against Muslims when an infamous preacher urged his followers to burn copies of the Holy Quran in 2010.

The clinic located at the Hoda Islamic Center and is run by Ahmed and 21 other volunteers. This year, they have treated around 300 disadvantaged resi-

dents, regardless of faith.

The youth award went to twins Zain and Aman Zabeer whose late grandmother, instilled in them a love of reading.

To honor her, the 17-year-old brothers founded Kids Inspiring Thought — Alive Through Books. The acronym, KITAB, means book in Hindi.

The organization has collected and given away 3,000 books to area schools and 1,000 books to the Teach for India program. In addition, it has set up reading nooks in public housing complexes.

Azzad participates in Manama conference on Islamic finance

Representatives from Azzad Asset Management joined leading scholars and senior representatives from central banks, financial institutions, and regulators from over 35 countries this month in the Kingdom of Bahrain for an annual conference on Islamic finance organized by the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI). Organized in cooperation with the World Bank and under the auspices of the Central Bank of Bahrain, the conference focused on integrating Islamic finance into global reporting standards and its compatibility with the legal systems of non-Muslim majority countries, including those in the West.

"As an AAOIFI member, I am pleased to attend this important gathering of practitioners and thought leaders," said Azzad President and CEO Bashar Qasem, CSAA, who attended the conference. "And as the president of a company dedicated to the strict adherence of AAOIFI standards in the way we do business, we are supportive of their efforts to harmonize Islamic finance standards across borders and to promote greater transparency.

Both are of critical importance to our industry." Mr. Qasem is one of the few Islamic finance professionals in the United States to have earned the Certified Shariah Adviser and Auditor (CSAA) accreditation from AAOIFI.

Azzad is an outspoken advocate of the Seven Tenets of Halal Investing, which follow AAOIFI guidelines in screening out stocks of companies in unethical lines of business. The investment advisory firm regularly educates others about how to invest in accordance with AAOIFI standards.

Opportunity for K-12 teachers for study of Muslim American identities

INDIANAPOLIS -- The academic study of Muslim American history and life is the focus of a summer seminar open to K-12 teachers.

Applications are now being accepted for a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar, "Muslim American Identities, Past and Present," to be held July 12 to Aug. 1, 2015, in Indianapolis.

Sixteen teachers from across the country will be selected for the three-week seminar during which they will discuss the racial, ethnic, religious and gender identities of U.S. Muslims.

Directed by Edward E. Curtis IV, an award-winning scholar of Islam in America and holder of the Millennium Chair of Liberal Arts at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, the seminar will focus on the academic study of Muslim American identities, not the religious or spiritual beliefs or habits of the participating teachers.

Participants will study 30 primary source documents written by Muslim Americans, listen to distinguished guest lecturers Kambiz GhaneaBassiri and Julianne Hammer, and visit two local mosques. They will also work on

individual research projects on topics such as Muslim American slave narratives, Islamic hip-hop, Muslim American food cultures and Muslim American political engagement.

"My primary aim is to nurture an environment of deep intellectual engagement and active learning in which teachers try to answer a key question of our time: What does it mean to be both Muslim and American?" said Curtis, who is the author of "Muslims in America," among other books.

The seminar will meet almost daily in the Campus Center on the IUPUI campus. In addition to meeting rooms, the IUPUI Campus Center houses a bookstore, a credit union and a food court.

As one of seven campuses administered by Indiana University, IUPUI is known as Indiana's premier urban research and health sciences campus. IUPUI has more than 30,000 students enrolled in 17 schools, which offer more than 250 degrees. IUPUI awards degrees from both Indiana and Purdue universities. The campus is near the heart of downtown Indianapolis. Several major cultural attractions and affordable restaurants are within walking distance or a brief bus ride.

All seminar participants receive a \$2,700 stipend to help cover transportation, food, housing and other costs. Housing is available on campus. Teachers in public and private schools are encouraged to apply.

Funding for the summer seminar comes from the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency that supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation.

Deadline for applications is March 2.

For additional information about the seminar, teachers should address their questions to Edward E. Curtis IV by phone at (317) 278-1683 or email:ecurtis4@iupui.edu.

Blood Drive at Muslim Unity Center Bloomfield

By Adil James, TMO

Farmington--December 6--Area Muslims are doing their best to do good, therefore participating in many efforts to benefit the wider community.

And so Bloomfield's Muslim Unity Center conducted a successful blood drive in conjunction with the regional office of the Red Cross this Saturday afternoon from 10AM to 4PM, collecting approximately 45 units of blood.

This blood drive was the second held at the center, although the previous one was five years ago.

Kelley DeLong, the Red

Cross's district representative for Southeast Michigan, said that "This was an especially successful" blood drive, and commented of the young volunteers from the Center that "the girls worked hard."

Maya Al-Saghir, one of the volunteers, said "Alhamdulillah there was a great turnout--our goal was 30 units, and we expect to get 45 pints. The Red Cross saves three lives with each pint."

There are many common exclusions that prevent people giving blood, the main ones are travel, medications, and for women low hemoglobin. 38% of people



l-r front row: Unity Center volunteers Maya Al-Saghir, Ila Sayed, and Tala Saghir. Behind them, Red Cross nurse Kathy Hellen.

can give blood, according to DeLong, however only 3% do.

You can give blood from the time you are age 16 until you are very old, and in fact Ms. DeLong spoke of her 80-year-old father

giving blood. "Actually, it's good for you."

The Red Cross had seven employees at the event, and the Unity Center had about 6 volunteers who helped.



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puzzle answers from pp. 21 and 16

U.S. Military Monitoring Islamic State Training in Libya: General

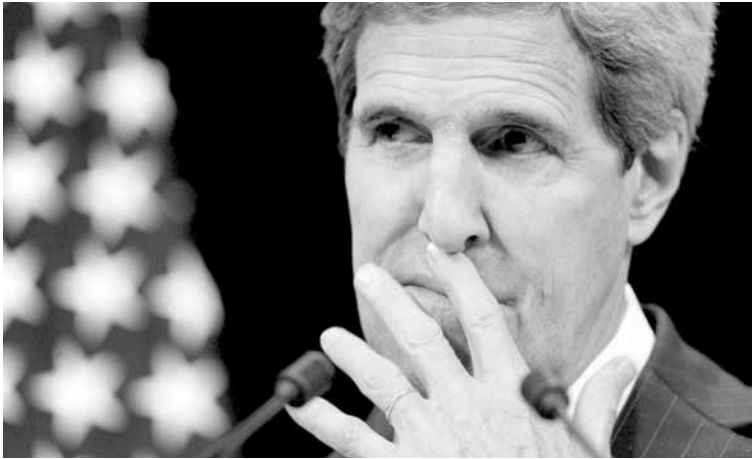


Black smoke billows from a warehouse after an airstrike in Zawura, December 2, 2014. At least three people were killed on Tuesday in air strikes on a town west of Tripoli carried out by forces loyal to Libya's internationally recognised government, which is in conflict with a rival force controlling the capital, officials said. The strikes targeted three locations in the Zawura city, including a food supply storage area, a fishing port and another unspecified target outside of the city, according to the local authorities and a military official. REUTERS/Stringer

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. military is closely monitoring a nascent effort by Islamic State, the militant group that has overrun parts of Syria and Iraq, to train a couple of hundred fighters in eastern Libya, the commander of U.S. forces in Africa said on Wednesday.

Army General David Rodriguez, head of the U.S. Africa Command, said it was not yet clear how closely aligned the trainees were with Islamic State or whether the effort should be targeted by U.S. forces. He said he had not recommended U.S. troops or

air power to go after the training camps in the chaotic North African country at this point. "We're watching it very carefully to see how it develops," Rodriguez told reporters at the Pentagon. "Right now it's just small and very nascent and we just have to see how it goes." Rodriguez said the trainees appeared to be members of Libyan militias who were "trying to make a name or trying to make a connection." It was unclear whether they might join Islamic State fighters elsewhere once their training was complete, he said. "It's mainly about people coming for training and logistics support right now, for training sites, and that's what we see right now. As far as a huge command and control network, have not seen that yet," Rodriguez said. "The numbers are somewhere around a couple hundred ... but again we don't have a specific precise assessment of that right now," he said. Libya itself is caught in a conflict between two rival governments, one which is self-declared and was set up in Tripoli after forces from group known as Libya Dawn took over the capital in the summer, and another, internationally recognized government which operates from the eastern city of Tobruk. (Reporting by David Alexander; Editing by Tom Brown)



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry gives a statement after a round table meeting of the global coalition to counter the Islamic State militant group at NATO headquarters in Brussels December 3, 2014. REUTERS/Eric Vidal



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Peltier "Feeling His Age" in Prison

By Karin Friedemann, TMO



Karin Friedemann

Editor's note: Karin Friedemann is a TMO contributor. Her opinions are her own.

A letter from long term political prisoner Leonard Peltier was read aloud by Bert Waters at the 45th Day of Mourning commemoration, which took place on November 27, 2014 in Plymouth Massachusetts. Every year, a letter from Peltier is read out loud to the crowd. Native American organizer Peltier, who grew up in Turtle Mountain Chippewa Indian Reservation, North Dakota, has served 37 years of a life sentence for allegedly killing an FBI agent. Peltier has long insisted on his innocence, and asserted that during his trial, the government withheld evidence and intimidated witnesses. Every presidential term, Peltier's supporters have begged unsuccessfully for amnesty.

"The blatant government

misconduct was a mitigating factor which should bear strongly on whether I should be immediately considered for parole," he argues.

Peltier is now 70 years old and losing his vision. This year's letter reading was particularly moving because it sounded like he doesn't have much time left to live. Still, he is trying to stay positive.

"In here, I am able to focus on the simple things in life. You have no idea how cool it is, just to get a new pair of socks," Peltier wrote. "In the past few months, I have really been feeling my age, and I am so very thankful for all the support you have given to me. I won't lie, it has been a rough time, lately, but I am hopeful that is changing. My people have always had a deep connected relationship with the sun, and I realized the other day just how much I miss the sun. When I had the sun's light upon me, I felt stronger. These walls hold out the sun's energy, and it weakens me."

Peltier stressed that personal visits and even the smell of the fiber in the paper his letters are written on helps him feel "a bit of the sunshine again." He said that his point is that "we may find the things we need in places that we might not expect."

"I can always pray. This can never be taken away from me. And through that prayer, I can

U.S. Expects Some Familiar Faces Among Syria Rebel Recruits



Syrian fighters fire a machinegun against Islamic State positions from a location west of Kobani during fighting on November 4, 2014. A Syrian rebel flag covers the front of the truck. REUTERS/Yannis Behrakis

By Phil Stewart

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States is creating a vigorous vetting process to weed out undesirables among the Syrian rebels it will train to fight Islamic State, but some of the new recruits will be familiar faces requiring far more limited screening.

The program is expected to include a number of fighters already known to the U.S. government who could take as little as a day to initially vet, U.S. officials said.

The United States already has ties with networks of Syrian fighters, including through a clandestine CIA program that has already trained rebels and through U.S. government programs to provide non-lethal aid.

"We (the U.S. government) have a current relationship with people on the ground. We are not starting from scratch," one U.S. official told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The priority is to screen out human rights viola-

Rebel, p. 14



I found Mr. Aslam's latest book *British Colonial Policies and the Muslim World* very interesting. It is a real eye opener for me. The message the book carries is well worth for every concerned Muslim, because it exposes the wickedness of British colonial policies and its effect on the Muslim Ummah. I highly recommend this book.

Mr. Aslam's other books are *Muslim Scientists and Thinkers* and *Evolution Where Do Muslims Stand*. These books are also excellent and thought provoking. All these books are available on Amazon or can be purchased directly by contacting the author. Aslamsyed1@yahoo.com.

-Dr. AS Nakadar

keep the sun, and hope alive. On this day, Thanksgiving, I shall choose to be thankful, and not to celebrate tyranny. And I'll also pray for you, and with you. I pray for each and every one of you, whether you support me or not. I pray that your lives will be full of meaning, and that you will find new ways to learn. I pray for your strength, and that you will always stand up for the things that you know are right. I pray that each one of you find a way to protect our Mother Earth. She is crying out for us to hear her. I pray that you will listen to your inner wisdom, let it guide you to make choices that will help each other and that you will be examples of those still learning their way in this life. I pray that you will be present with the moment you have, and enjoy the simple things of life, like the sun, the dirt, the air, the water, and that you would protect them as you would your own children.

"I pray that you will look for opportunities to lift up your sisters and brothers, and not bring them down. I pray that you will grow and enjoy good, natural food. I pray that you savor the attention

of your loved ones, and that you build bridges of peace to those you oppose. I pray that when others make bad choices, that you would help them find positive solutions. I pray for understanding in times of misunderstanding.

"And yes, I pray very deeply and honestly that I can go home, go home for a little while, before I cross over, cross over to the spirit world."

At this point many people in the audience of about 300 persons began to weep.

"I am with you always, and I feel your prayers too. I am always grateful for your support, your love, your friendship, your letters and contact you give me with life. It is harder for me to physically see well enough to write letters these days, so please forgive me if I don't write back. It's not that I don't want to. Know that I am often sitting and thinking of you and being thankful for you, all of you. Your old, thankful friend and brother. In the spirit of Crazy Horse, Leonard Peltier."

A red blanket with gold fringe was carried through the crowd to collect donations for Peltier's legal fund, so that he can

continue to fight for his release (see leonardpeltier.info).

The group then performed their traditional march through town, past Plymouth Rock, chanting among other things, "Free Leonard Peltier!" singing tribal songs and beating drums. After a prayer and burning of sage at the town square where the head of the rebellious Wampanoag chief Metacom, also known as King Philip, was displayed on a stake for twenty years by the Puritans in front of First Parish Church in the late 1600's, the crowd enjoyed a turkey dinner inside the church, provided by the United American Indians of New England (UAINE).

Despite his imprisonment, Peltier is widely recognized for his remarkable contributions to humanitarian causes. He "has played a key role in getting people from different tribes, with a history of animosity, to come together in peace." He has worked with various communities to improve health care on US reservations, stimulate reservation-based businesses, organized an emergency food drive for Mexico, and developed prisoner art programs. Peltier counsels other Native American prisoners to rehabilitate themselves by advocating a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle upholding the beauty of their tribal heritage and customs.



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Facing Islamic State in Syria, U.S.-Trained Rebels Await More Help

By Tom Perry

GAZIANTEP, Turkey (Reuters) - Syrian rebel commander Abdulaziz says U.S. military training helped his men kill at least 15 Islamic State fighters in a recent battle near Aleppo. Three months earlier, a similar engagement had gone the other way, with two of his men killed.

But his group, the Mujahideen Army, does not know if more of its men will be sent for training, such is the uncertainty surrounding plans for expanding aid to the “moderate” rebels who the United States hopes will fight Islamic State in Syria.

The 50 fighters were the first from their group to attend the training in Qatar, part of an ostensibly covert CIA program to offer military support to vetted factions in opposition to President Bashar al-Assad.

“We felt the difference. Even the (Islamic State fighters) felt the difference. I knew this because this time they withdrew,” said Abdulaziz, 32, describing the day-long battle in October and giving only his first name.

“There has been an improvement in those 50.”

Their month-long course in September included training on how to fire mortar bombs, heavy machine guns and American-made anti-tank missiles, in addition to battlefield tactics, and interviews aimed partly at assessing any radical leanings.

“We returned as one unit,” said Abdulaziz, speaking at the Mujahideen Army’s office in the southeastern Turkish city of Gaziantep, a short drive from the Syrian border. “The guys feel they are fighters at least. Their morale is higher.”

But while the support has been useful, it falls short of what his group says they need to advance on the battlefield where they are outgunned by the government and Islamic State.

His men returned with anti-tank TOW missiles, the hallmark of rebels vetted in the year-old CIA program. But like others, it says the support is insufficient.

“My message is: support the fighters properly, with ammunition and salaries. If they support us properly, they would not need to send the warplanes,” Abdulaziz said, referring to U.S.-led air strikes against Islamic State.

Mainstream rebels say the failure of the United States and its allies to support them adequately has allowed groups such as Islamic State to dominate after 3-1/2 years of war.

Loosely defined as the “Free Syrian Army”, these groups have suffered heavy losses fighting both government and jihadist forces.

FRONT LINE

The Mujahideen Army is one

of the biggest mainstream groups left in northern Syria. It says it has 6,000 personnel.

Northeast of Aleppo, its fighters are helping to hold a front line at the western edge of Islamic State’s self-declared “caliphate”. Islamic State advanced west towards Aleppo this summer before halting in September to attack the Kurdish town of Kobani.

The risk of Islamic State resuming its westward march makes the need for more support all the more acute.

But more than two months since the U.S.-led alliance began air strikes against Islamic State in Syria, such moderate groups do not know how or if they will fit into the new training plans being set up by the Pentagon.

The U.S. military says an opposition force of 12,000 to 15,000 is needed to retake the east from Islamic State. A Pentagon spokesman said on Nov. 4 there had been progress in setting up the curriculum, readying the sites and securing trainers from the United States and other nations.

But the vetting process has yet to begin, suggesting it may take several more months to start.

The new program is separate from the CIA-run one that has already vetted and offered training to a number of groups. The CIA has declined to comment on this program.

Western and Arab states that oppose Assad have already been channeling what rebels describe as small amounts of military and financial aid to non-jihadist groups. These groups say they have already been through a vetting process.

“They asked about the lives of the fighters, where they worked before, everything about their lives,” said Abdulaziz, describing conversations with the American trainers in Qatar.

“From these questions, they understand the mindset of this young man,” he said. “We told them: ‘You look at Islam as if it is only (Islamic State). We told them (Islamic State) is not Islam otherwise we wouldn’t be fighting them. They are not Muslims to begin with.’”

For the rebels, the big questions now are whether they will be part of the new program and whether they will still receive support through the already established channels.

“We are completely in the dark,” said a member of the Mujahideen Army’s political office, who declined to be identified.

“Are they going to finish the vetting of the Mujahideen Army or not? Are they going to be creating a new vetting program? There is a lot of ambiguity,” he said.



A child, who is internally displaced due to fighting between rebels and forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, hides his face as he sits inside a tent at the Jarjanaz refugee camp in the southern countryside of Idlib November 30, 2014. REUTERS/Khalil Ashawi

Thousands of Syrian Refugees Stranded in Turkish Minefield: Rights Group

By Kieran Guilbert

LONDON (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - A human rights watchdog urged Turkey on Wednesday to remove from its border with Syria landmines which have killed three people and wounded nine among more than 2,000 Syrian refugees camped in a minefield.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the refugees, living in their cars after fleeing the Islamic State onslaught in Syria, were stuck in the minefield because Turkey had refused entry for vehicles and livestock, and they did not want to abandon their belongings.

Turkey reported that its military laid more than 600,000 mines along the Syrian border between 1957 and 1998 to prevent illegal border crossings, HRW said.

“To fall victim to a landmine after losing your home and fleeing your country is a fate no one should have to endure,” HRW arms director Steve Goose said in a statement.

Since fighting between Kurdish forces and Islamic State’s Sunni militants began in September around the Syrian border town of Kobani, thousands of Syrians have fled into Turkey through a narrow strip of mined land along the border, known as the Tel Shair corridor, the watchdog said.

There have been at least 70 mine explosions in the area over the last two months, it said, citing aid workers as saying a mine exploded every two to three days, triggered by fleeing civilians or livestock.

One victim, Selma, whose home was destroyed by Islamic State, was carrying her one-year-old son across the border, with her seven-year-old daughter clutching her dress, when she stepped on a mine.

Her daughter suffered first degree burns on her face, and aid workers took Selma to a Turkish hospital where doctors amputated her left leg.

Selma, a farmer and mother

of six, told HRW she had seen no signs warning that there were landmines in the area.

Of the deaths and injuries reported by HRW, the majority were youngsters aged between five and 15, it said.

In its annual Landmine Monitor report issued on Wednesday, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) said the number of recorded casualties of mines and other explosive remnants of war had fallen to its lowest level since 1999, but the number of child victims had risen.

In 2013, children made up almost half of the 2,403 civilian landmine casualties worldwide whose age was known, 7 percent

more than in 2012, and HRW researcher Mark Hiznay said child refugees in the Tel Shair corridor were at particular risk due to their family responsibilities.

“Families expect their children to shepherd the livestock, find places to graze and collect materials to start fires,” Hiznay told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone.

Hiznay said Turkey, which joined the Mine Ban Treaty in 2003, requiring it to destroy all mines, should clear its minefields immediately to avoid further harm.

(Story refiled to correct name in final three paragraphs)

(Reporting By Kieran Guilbert; Editing by Tim Pearce)

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U.S. Believes Iran Launched Air Raids on Islamic State in Iraq

By Phil Stewart



An Iraqi Shiite fighter prays on the front line against the Islamic State in Saadiya, Diyala province, November 23, 2014. Iraqi forces said on Sunday they retook two towns north of Baghdad from Islamic State fighters, driving them from strongholds they had held for months and clearing a main road from the capital to Iran. Picture taken November 23, 2014. REUTERS/Stringer

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States has indications that Iran has carried out air strikes on Islamic State targets in Iraq in recent days in what appeared to be the first such operations by Iran's air force, U.S. officials said on Wednesday.

A senior Iranian official denied that Iran had launched any

such strikes.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States had indications that Iran had used F-4 Phantoms to launch the raids in Diyala near the Iranian border in the last several days.

An Iraqi security expert gave a slightly different account, say-

ing the strikes took place 10 days ago. "It is true that Iranian planes hit some targets in Diyala. Of course the government denies it because they have no radars," Hisham al-Hashemi told Reuters.

A Pentagon spokesman declined to go into details about the air raids during a media briefing. Officials said the strikes appeared

to be the first carried out by the Iranian air force.

Diyala is an ethnically mixed province, where the Iraqi army, backed by Kurdish Peshmerga and Shi'ite militias, drove Islamic State out of several towns and villages last month.

A British-based analyst said footage on Al Jazeera television of an F-4 Phantom striking Islamic State in Diyala was the first visual evidence of direct Iranian air force involvement in the conflict.

"Iran and Turkey are the only regional operators of the F-4, and with the location of the incident not far from the Iranian border and Turkey's unwillingness to get involved in the conflict militarily, indicators point to this being an Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force aircraft," said Gareth Jennings of IHS Jane's Defence Weekly.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declined to comment. "I am not going to make any announcements, or confirm or deny the reported military action of another country in Iraq. It is up to them (the Iranians) or up to the Iraqis to do that if it did indeed take place," Kerry told a news conference in Brussels.

The White House reiterated U.S. policy against cooperating with Iran in the fight against Islamic State. "At this point our calculation about the wisdom of cooperating with the Iranians hasn't changed. We're not going to do it," spokesman Josh Earnest said.

Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby told a Washington news briefing on Tuesday that it was up to the Iraqis to manage their air space.

"It's the Iraqi air space and (Iraq's) to deconflict. We are not coordinating with nor are we deconflicting with Iranian military," Kirby said. Deconflict in military

parlance means to avoid overlap.

The prospect of U.S. and Iranian militaries separately carrying out air strikes in the same country raises questions about the degree of advanced coordination that might be needed, even indirectly, to avoid a mishap.

The U.S. military detailed on Wednesday 11 more strikes in Iraq. But officials noted that there were no U.S. air operations or American troops on the ground in the areas where they said Iranian aircraft had operated.

A senior Iranian official said no raids had been carried out and Tehran had no intention of cooperating with Washington.

"Iran has never been involved in any air strikes against Daesh (Islamic State) targets in Iraq. Any cooperation in such strikes with America is also out of question for Iran," the senior official said on condition of anonymity.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, in Brussels for a meeting of the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State, said he was not aware of any Iranian air strikes.

While Shi'ite Iran and the United States have been at odds for decades, they have a common enemy in Islamic State, the hard-line Sunni group that has seized large areas of Iraq and Syria.

Iran backs the Iraqi Shi'ite militias which are battling Islamic State and has sent senior commanders to help advise the Iraqi army and militia operations since the group took parts of northern Iraq in the summer. Iraqi officials say there are no Iranian troops on its soil.

(Additional reporting by Parisa Hafezi, Lesley Wroughton, Raheem Salman and Dominic Evans; Editing by Giles Elgood and David Stamp)

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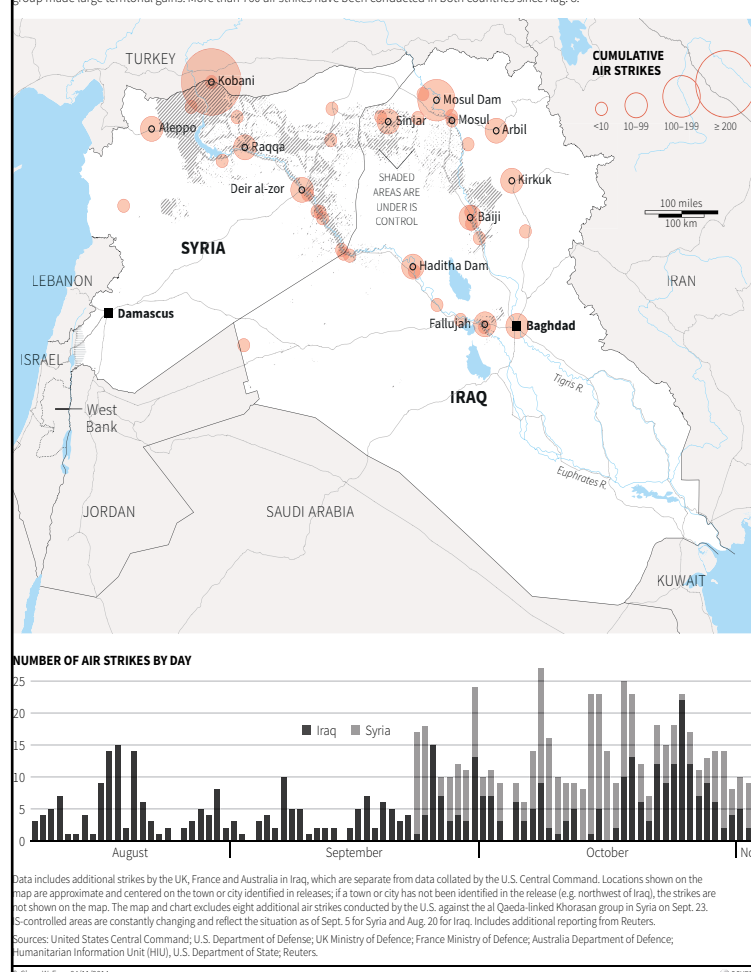
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Air strikes in Iraq and Syria against Islamic State

The U.S.-led coalition has been bombing Islamic State (IS) targets in Iraq since August and extended the campaign to Syria in September after the group made large territorial gains. More than 760 air strikes have been conducted in both countries since Aug. 8.



News of OPEC's Demise Has Been Much Exaggerated: Kemp

Editor's note: The opinions expressed here are those of the author, a columnist for Reuters.

By John Kemp

LONDON, Dec 3 (Reuters) - The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) last week made no change to its production target despite a 40 percent slide in oil prices over just five months, causing some commentators to pronounce the cartel irrelevant.

If OPEC cannot act to defend the prices and revenues of its member countries, does the organization still serve any purpose?

There is an assumption among some commentators that OPEC is only relevant and working if ministers can reach a production agreement in response to shifts in prices, and that strong disagreement is a sign of dysfunction.

But the record suggests that ambitious production-cutting agreements are rare, rather than the norm, and that a robust exchange of views is typical.

There is nothing new about predicting the end of OPEC. Following one particularly acrimonious meeting in 1981, the Kuwaiti oil minister told waiting journalists: "News of OPEC's death has been much exaggerated." A third of a century later, the organization is still going.

OPEC has always had fierce foes eager to forecast its demise, especially in the United States, where there are still memories about the Arab oil embargo, gasoline lines and soaring fuel prices in the 1970s.

Bitter recollections of the oil crisis merge with Watergate, defeat in Vietnam, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis to make the 1970s the most humiliating decade in U.S. history.

Little wonder, then, that some hawkish U.S. commentators, eager to ensure it never happens again, have developed a narrative in which home grown shale has finally ended the embarrassing dependence on foreign oil and ended OPEC's dominance of the market.

But is it true? Has OPEC finally become irrelevant almost exactly four decades after it burst into the popular imagination during the first oil shock in 1973?

A STRANGE SORT OF CARTEL

OPEC members object to the organization being labeled a "cartel" but there is no doubt OPEC has many cartel-like features.

OPEC's founding statute, agreed in Baghdad in 1960, commits the organization, among other things, to coordinate and unify member states' oil policies, stabilize prices and secure a steady income for producing countries. That certainly sounds like a cartel.

If OPEC has aspired to be

a cartel, however, it has always been a very strange one. The classic textbook cartel is a group of producers that control production and investment, and sometimes allocate customers and limit competition, to secure higher prices and greater returns than under competitive conditions. OPEC has never really done any of these things.

OPEC's members have always competed fiercely with one another to sell their crude to customers, at times offering secret deals and discounts to retain market share. There has never been an agreement to allocate customers or limit price competition.

OPEC has never agreed on investment and future production. Most members, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq treat in-

formation about exploration, reserves and investment as state secrets and refuse to disclose them to one another let alone outsiders.

Even on production, OPEC has only tried to reach agreement intermittently. For more than 20 years after the organization was founded, it was concerned mostly with prices, taxes and nationalization. It did not have any targets for production at all.

The first production allocations were introduced only in April 1982 and they continued to be periodically revised until November 2006.

Since then, the organization has set an overall target but has been unable to agree on how it should be allocated among the member countries.

Even when the organization



OPEC Secretary-General Abdullah al-Badri points to a journalist during a news conference after a meeting of OPEC oil ministers at OPEC's headquarters in Vienna November 27, 2014. Al-Badri said on Thursday the organisation has "no target price", when asked about previous aspirations of \$100 per barrel. A statement by OPEC issued after the group met also made no mention of any need for the members to comply with the existing output ceiling target of 30 million barrels per day. REUTERS/Heinz-Peter Bader

actually had country-level allocations, most of the time they were ignored. Most members produced as much as they were able.

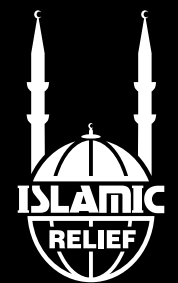
THE PROBLEM OF NON-

MEMBERS

If OPEC has tried at times to behave like a cartel, it has never

OPEC, p. 14

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Heroes

from pg 3

fight within and settle scores with your own brethren, who needs the services of external foes? No wonder Netanyahu cannot stop grinning, from ear to ear, proudly unveiling one settlement after another and setting his sights on Al Aqsa, the prized catch.

To an external observer, especially a non-Arab Muslim, all this is truly bewildering. In the last

century, a sage asked: 'Tum sabhi kuch ho, batao toe Musalman bhi hoe?' (You boast myriad identities but are you Muslim too?)

The question has never been more relevant. If Arab and Muslim nations recognize that they all face the same monsters and common existential threats, what prevents them from coming together and putting together a collective front? Instead of endlessly bickering and fighting among them-

selves, wouldn't it make sense to save their energy and resources to confront the common enemy?

They say great necessities call forth great leaders. And, as Truman warned, in periods of great crises where there is no leadership, society stands still. Perhaps that explains our drifting and aimlessness as a people. Where are our leaders when we need them the most?

Rebel

from pg 10

tors, spies and rebels who might switch sides.

The Pentagon said on Tuesday that Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia offered to host the training program but declined to discuss names of other nations which might also participate. People familiar with the planning told Reuters that Jordan had also offered to host the program. Jordan's embassy declined to comment.

The program, which is expected to start in the coming months, is at the core of President Barack Obama's strategy in Syria, a multiyear plan to field local forces to halt and eventually roll back Islamic State fighters, while keeping American troops off the battlefield.

TRAINED TO ACT ALONE

The Pentagon has estimated that it can train 5,400 recruits in the first year and that up to 15,000 will be needed to retake areas of eastern Syria controlled by Islamic State. It hopes more training sites might allow training of more recruits.

They will face a thorough vetting, including psychological

exams and gathering of biometric data, the official said. Candidates' names would be run through U.S. databases and shared with regional allies for checks.

The level of vetting and training will take account of the fact that the fighters will not be accompanied by U.S. troops on missions.

If a recruit was previously known to the U.S. government, the military might need just a day to verify personal data. If not, the checks may take weeks.

Once in the program, all fighters will be monitored continuously, officials said. Many candidates will be drawn from Syrian towns and villages and be put through an initial training course lasting one or two months.

The goal would be to recruit pre-existing units of 100 to 200 fighters from a Syrian group. But in some cases, the U.S. military may recruit individuals from a geographic area.

"You want to get them back on the battlefield as fast as you can," a second official said.

The U.S. military might also recruit fighters outside Syria, including among refugee populations.

PROGRAM FRAUGHT WITH RISKS

Officials say they would like to accelerate the training, but uncertain local conditions in a country gripped by war made this hard. If a village is under attack, for example, potential recruits will not be able to leave their posts to undergo training.

The vetting and training are meant to minimize risks, including infiltration by the Syrian intelligence services, that trained fighters later side with Islamic State or that recruits later turn their weapons on American forces.

The U.S. military has learned hard lessons about the risks of so-called "green-on-blue" attacks in Afghanistan, where an Afghan soldier shot and killed a U.S. general in August.

The goal is to create forces that, in the near term, would focus on defending territory, but some would get special training to help them take the fight to the Islamic State, in what was described by U.S. officials as a "building block" approach.

(Reporting by Phil Stewart; Editing by David Storey)



Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson

from pg 1

Qur'an: Islam and the Founders."

The Hamilton Awards are among the highest honors of literary achievement given for UT Austin authors.

In "Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders"

Image licensed from Clipart.com

(published by Alfred A. Knopf), Spellberg recounts how a handful of the country's founders, Jefferson foremost among them, drew upon Enlightenment ideas about the tolerance of Muslims to fashion a practical foundation for governance in America.

OPEC

from pg 13

been able to control anything like the whole market.

OPEC's share of global oil production peaked at 51 percent in 1973 (which coincided with the height of its power). For most of the last four decades, however, the organization has accounted for 40 percent or less of global output.

OPEC's problem has always been its inability to restrain production by non-members. Sustained price rises have generally brought a boom in non-OPEC exploration and production, reducing the organization's market share.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the surge in non-OPEC supplies came from the North Sea, Alaska, the Gulf of Mexico, the Soviet Union and China. In the 2010s, it has come from U.S. shale formations.

OPEC has never had much success persuading non-members to restrain their output to ensure higher prices and better revenues for all members and non-members alike.

It has not been for want of trying. In the mid-1980s, Saudi Arabia lobbied Britain and Norway to limit output from the North

Sea and maintain prices, but was rebuffed (though not before Mrs Thatcher's famously free-market government had flirted with price fixing in a series of secret meetings).

In the 2010s, there is simply no question of reaching an agreement with U.S. shale producers because it would be prohibited by antitrust law.

THREE INSTANCES OF SUCCESS

OPEC has only coordinated its members' production policies successfully on three occasions: 1986, 1998 and 2008.

In each case, the organization's members agreed to cut output in response to a plunge in prices caused by soft demand (1986, 1998 and 2008) and strong growth in alternative supplies (1986).

It is worth noting the organization has been more successful in responding to periods of demand weakness (which are generally thought to be temporary) than supply growth (which poses a longer-term structural challenge of how to split declining market share).

Two of the three instances of successful coordination came in response to weakness in demand (1998 and 2008). Only one

instance of coordination came in response to the problem of rival supply (1986).

But these three instances of output coordination were relatively fleeting; most of the time, members have produced and sold as much oil as they are able.

OPEC has not deliberately restrained output for most of the last 40 years. There is no question Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Venezuela, Libya and Nigeria would all like to produce and sell more oil if they could. Between them, these six countries are actually producing 1.5 million barrels per day less than they did in 1974, according to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy.

If total OPEC output has been constrained, the constraints have been involuntary: due to civil conflict (Iran's revolution, Nigeria's instability), war (Iran-Iraq, U.S.-Iraq twice), sanctions (Iran, Iraq, Libya) and expropriation (Venezuela, Iran, Libya).

If OPEC has sometimes appeared to wield enormous power, as when members agreed a series of staggering price rises during the 1970s, it was because external circumstances were unusually favorable rather than because the organization's members discovered exceptional discipline.

Even in the supposed heydays of the 1970s and early 1980s, ministerial meetings were riven by prolonged and bitter disagreements over pricing and strategy.

Meetings often lasted for a week or more and sometimes broke up without agreement. On at least three occasions, the veteran Saudi Oil Minister Zaki Yamani walked out either in protest, to seek further instructions or to find a working telephone ("Yamani: the inside story" 1988).

OPEC AS INSTITUTIONAL SURVIVOR

There is no question that the shale revolution has tipped the balance of power in the oil market by opening up vast new resources (just as the North Sea did in the 1980s).

But OPEC is as relevant today as it has ever been throughout its 54-year history. That is to say, it is far less powerful than its enemies and detractors fear but it is far from being irrelevant.

OPEC members still hold a large chunk of the world's known oil reserves so their ability and willingness to produce them will continue to have a big impact on prices.

Like a host of other international bodies, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and

the International Monetary Fund, OPEC as an institution sometimes appears to have outlived its original purpose.

But if it did not exist, most member countries would still want to discuss oil market issues with one another. If OPEC did not exist, it would be necessary to invent another organization much like it.

Crucially, OPEC provides a framework in which countries dependent on oil for exports and government revenues can exchange views and discuss common problems.

OPEC has become a part of the "international furniture." It facilitates dialog, helps educate officials and ministers from some of the less-advanced members, collects statistics, provides useful analysis of market trends, and provides a counterpoint to the perspective of the International Energy Agency, which represents the interests of consuming countries.

And from time to time, when the circumstances are right, it is a forum in which to allocate production cuts. It has served that purpose in the past, and may do so again in future - just not right now. (Editing by William Hardy)

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No.	Name	Address	Per.	No.	Name	Address	Per.
1	RAMEESHA SHERIN K	KERALA	100.00%	1	WASEEMA RISAANA S M D/O. S M MOHAMED SATHATH ALI	TAMILNADU	98.40%
2	MOHAMMED NOMAN AHMED S/O. MOHAMMED NAYEEM PASHA	TELANGANA	98.90%	2	UZAIR SHAGHIL	KARNATAKA	97.12%
3	SUHA IQBAL QURAISHI D/O. MOHAMMED IQBALUDDIN QURAISHI	ANDHRA PRADESH	98.50%	3	MOHAMMAD SHADAB GAZI ABDUL SAMAD	MAHARASHTRA	96.80%
4	ALIFIYA K M	TAMIL NADU	97.75%	4	IDARIYA RUVAIDAKHATUN D/O. MOHMEDRAFIQ	GUJARAT	95.67%
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Sudoku Puzzle!

The Rules of Sudoku: The classic Sudoku game involves a grid of 81 squares. The grid is divided into nine blocks, each containing nine squares.

The rules of the game are simple: each of the nine blocks has to contain all the numbers 1-9 within its squares. Each number can only appear once in a row, column or box.

The difficulty lies in that each vertical nine-square column, or horizontal nine-square line across, within the larger square, must also contain the numbers 1-9, without repetition or omission.

Every puzzle has just one solution (see p. 8).

	8			3			1	
		4	8		1	9		
3		7				2		6
	7	2		5		1	3	
	9	6		8		4	2	
7		8				6		2
		1	6		9	8		
	6			7			4	

Chicken Asparagus Soup

By Fizza, fizza@muslimobserver.com

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz bone less chicken
- 4 stalks of asparagus
- 4 cups clear chicken broth
- 2 tbsp corn flour mixed with 2 tbsp water
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ tsp white pepper

METHOD

Slice chicken into thin strips. Cut asparagus into two pieces. Boil the broth and add chicken and simmer till tender. Add salt, pepper, asparagus and corn flour mixture. Stir till the soup thickens. Serve in a large bowl.



Note: If you see ingredients here that are available in haram or halal form (like vanilla extract), you can choose for yourself which form you want to use--TMO is absolutely not advocating that you use haram or questionable ingredients.

Dementia

By Fasiha Hasham,

drfasiha@muslimobserver.com

INTRODUCTION

Dementia or progressive cerebral dysfunction is a disorder characterized by impaired intellect, memory loss and altered personality. It usually occurs in age above 65.

SYMPTOMS

- Alteration in personality
- Impaired short term memory
- Forgetting to perform basic tasks
- Loss of interest
- Loss of ability to reason

CAUSE

Dementia in the elderly can be due to multiple causes, some of which can be treated and dementia can be reversed.

The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's disease, which is a irreversible condition of the brain. In this disease the brain deteriorates. Another common cause that can cause dementia is series of small strokes; in this case early diagnosis can prevent the progress of this type of dementia. Other causes of irreversible dementia are Alcoholism, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and AIDS.

Reversible causes of dementia include drug intoxication, depression and anxiety, blood sugar disorder, kidney disease, hypothyroidism, malnutrition, vitamin deficiency, trauma of brain or tumor of the brain, infections and Arteriosclerosis.

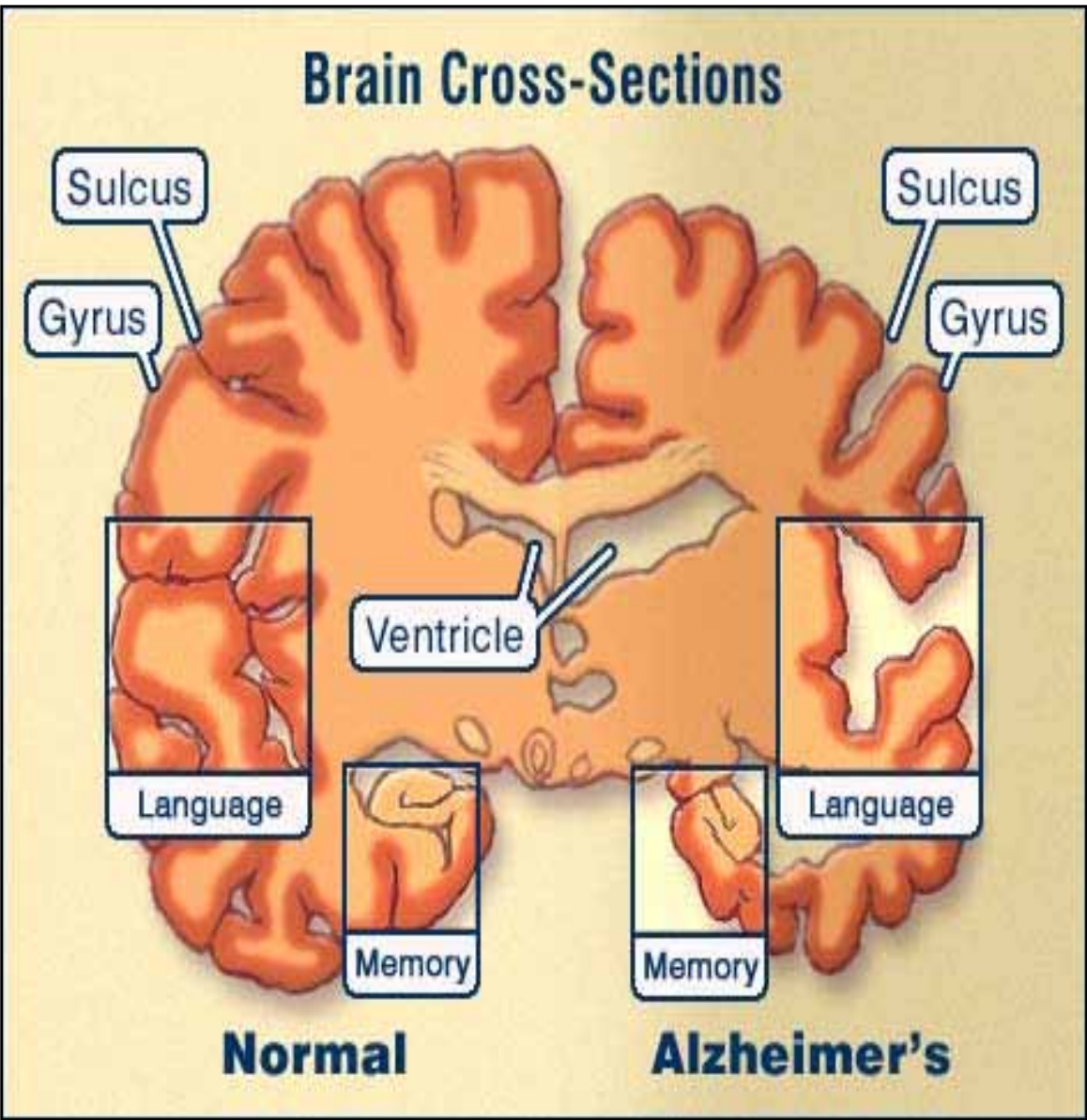
DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Any change in behavior and mental function requires a complete physical examination by a doctor. To find out the cause blood tests, x-rays and CT scans can be performed. If the underlying cause is reversible, then the doctor will treat the underlying cause to correct it. If the dementia is due to a irreversible cause like Alzheimer's, then counseling and life style modification are suggested to the patient and the family, because in these cases the patient might need continuous care. In some cases antipsychotic medication are also prescribed by the doctor to treat the aggressive behavior.

COURSE OF THE DISEASE

It depends on the underlying cause. If the cause is reversible, it can be treated for example drug interaction, the doctor may change the medication and mental health can be restored. In case of irreversible cause dementia progress as the disease progress, counseling and life style modification can help the patient in this process.

IMPORTANT NOTES



- Avoid alcohol and drug abuse
- Do not smoke
- Eat a low fat diet and maintain blood pressure and blood cholesterol under normal range.
- If the person is feeling depressed and is suffering

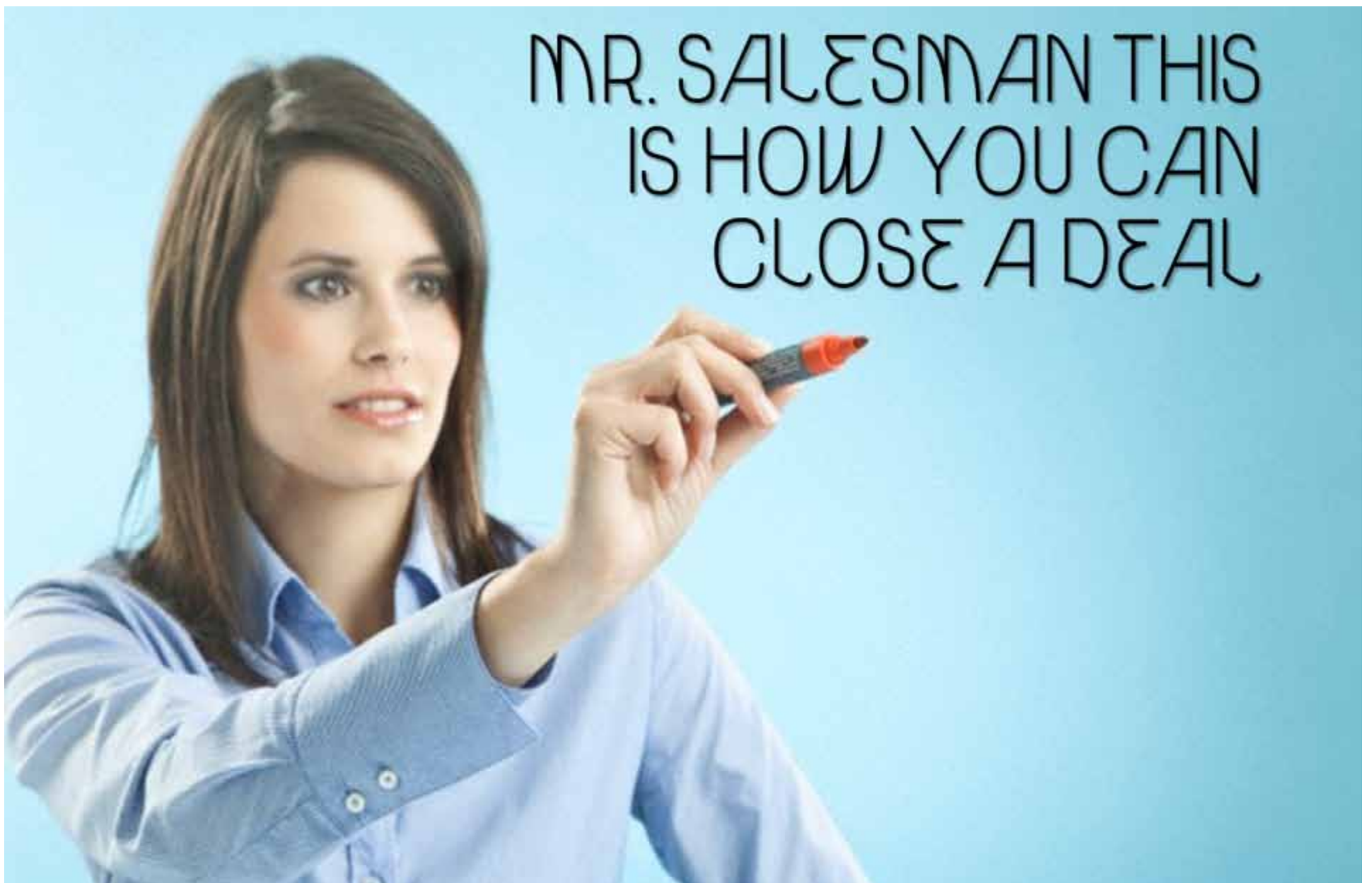
from insomnia for more than a week seek medical help

When visiting a doctor list all the prescription drugs and the non prescription drugs that you are using.

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INTERNATIONAL SUMMARY

Casualties:

Coalition KIA in Afghanistan: 1**
Cost of war (1 week): \$2.3 bill***

total as of this week-- Monday 12/3/14

Coalition KIA (both wars): *8,288
Cost of War: \$1,585.4 billion

total as of one week ago-- Monday 11/24/14

Coalition KIA (both wars): *8,287
Cost of War: \$1,583.1 billion

** We have now changed our focus to include only Afghanistan, despite the continually growing death toll from unrest in Iraq that could be attributed to the American invasion, because the US has left Iraq.

*** www.costofwar.com. National Priorities Project (NPP) numbers revised. An estimate based on the current amount budgeted for the war. This number occasionally jumps based on new budget allocations or amended calculations.

U.S. couple stuck in Qatar in child death case can leave: ambassador

LOS ANGELES--Qatar will soon lift a travel ban that has kept a U.S. couple from leaving the Gulf Arab state even after their convictions were overturned in the death of their African-born adopted daughter, the U.S. ambassador to Qatar said on Tuesday.

New Syrian opposition grouping fails to entice major rebel factions

ISTANBUL--The latest effort to unify the fractured Syrian military opposition has done little to create a cohesive vehicle for foreign military aid that could fight insurgents in Syria, after at least two major rebel groups dropped out of the initiative.

NATO backs U.S.-led training force for Afghanistan

BRUSSELS--NATO foreign ministers agreed on Tuesday to launch a new training mission for Afghanistan next year, replacing combat troops who pull out by the end of the year after 13 years of war.

Kenyan president changes security officials after al Shabaab kill 36

NAIROBI--Somali al Shabaab Islamist militants killed 36 non-Muslim workers at a quarry in northeast Kenya on Tuesday, prompting the president to sweep out his top security officials in order to tackle a relentless wave of violence.

U.S. diplomat to visit Asia over North Korea policy

WASHINGTON--A top U.S. diplomat handling North Korea will travel to South Korea, Japan and China later this week to meet with officials and discuss policy toward the isolated country, the U.S. State Department said on Tuesday.

Mother of swapped at birth says hospital mocked her

JOHANNESBURG--A South African mother whose baby was accidentally swapped at birth said on Tuesday that hospital workers had mocked her when she insisted she had given birth to a girl, not a boy.

News compilation from Reuters

Lebanon detains wife of Islamic State leader

BEIRUT--The Lebanese army detained a wife and daughter of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as they crossed from Syria nine days ago, security officials said on Tuesday, in a move seen as likely to put pressure on the Islamist chief.

Hong Kong Occupy founders tell students to retreat amid fears of violence

The founders of Hong Kong's Occupy Central civil disobedience movement on Tuesday called on pro-democracy activists to retreat from the city center over fears of violence, just hours after a student leader had called on supporters to regroup.

Netanyahu seeks early election, fires top ministers

JERUSALEM--Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sacked his finance and justice ministers on Tuesday, signaling the break up of his bickering coalition and opening the way for early national elections in Israel.

Gunmen kill six Lebanese soldiers on border with Syria: security source

BEIRUT--Gunmen killed at least six Lebanese soldiers when they attacked an army patrol near the border with Syria on Tuesday, a Lebanese security source said.



Students of Teyfik Ileri Imam Hatip School eat and chat during a break in Ankara November 18, 2014. Turkey has seen a sharp rise in religious schooling under reforms which President Tayyip Erdogan casts as a defence against moral decay, but which opponents see as an unwanted drive to shape a more Islamic nation. Almost a million students are



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Clergy

from pg 5

should not be allowed inside the places of worship and if they are there, they should be segregated so that no one could see them and they all believe in that.

They are told that one should not ever greet or pray for a non-Muslim, otherwise they would violate their faith and they accept it.

And so on so forth....

These are the innocent souls of Islam whose heart is as pure as a diamond and whose intentions are as sincere as the natural stream water. They have the ambition to live a decent life and they have the desire to follow a discipline in their life that is built around the guidance of a higher, neutral and objective authority and not by any man or woman. They are the Muslim youth and whatever they believe of the above, they believe in all their sincerity and honesty. They do not have nefarious designs, they do not have criminal mind. They want to lead their lives meaningfully on the basis of what they are told is true Islam.

But a clergy that is not supposed to be part of their faith, and a clerical system that is not even approved by the one who introduced them to God has somehow convinced them to believe in all that is stated above not by Allah or His messenger but a leadership that has often served the rulers and the power hungry monarchs and army generals to serve their interests. This class that justifies its existence on the authority of God and His messenger has convinced the youth and the Muslim masses that they are the gatekeepers of Islam and without their seal of approval none can find the true essence of their religion. They have declared them the representatives of God on earth and the heirs of the messengers. Every messenger offered life in support of the ideals he stood for. Yet, most of them hide their personal lives from the people they claim to serve and then use Islam to serve their sect, faction, school thought regardless of the consequences on others.

This class of so called religious people who often describe itself as scholars of their faith have convinced the youth and the masses that their salvation lies in their ability to follow the gatekeepers of Islam without developing the tools to empower them individually. This class has convinced the youth not to think independently and connect with the divine guidance directly. If you want to join the ranks of the faithful people abandon critical thinking, and independent inquiry and follow everything that has been handed down to them in the name of religion blindly. They want blindness to overshadow a faith that came to remove darkness.

Every issue has been resolved and every question has been answered, hence there is no need to open it again reinvent the wheel and corrupt one's religion. There is no need even to question

the status quo. There is no need to learn from others. There is no need to positively engage with others in making this planet a better place. Only they on the basis of their understanding of everything in the universe can guide the people. Once people do all that has been suggested to them, things will improve and they would be successful in this world and in the life hereafter.

Majority of youth and masses has accepted this. They are unable to improve a mosque or an institution they claim is inspired by Islam, yet they want to meddle in every aspect of human life on the basis of their biased and subjective understanding of Islam.

Many do exactly what they have been told, yet the situation does not improve and misery and humiliation of Muslims abate and increase. The gatekeepers of Islam tell them to have patience because Allah is putting them through trials. Generations have passed and the trial continues with deterioration at every field.

These people have been sedated with an understanding of faith that is not supposed to be there. Yet under the mask of piety, religious garbs, and appearances, this class has continued to survive and thrive without contributing anything to the growth and development of individual or collective personality.

Islam in our times has been reduced to an ideology of isolation and alienation. It has been turned into a faith of thoughtless robots who perform a task based on the programming their manufacturer puts in their system.

A nation of 1-6 billion intelligent, dynamic and living people has been rendered useless by a class of people who hide their egos behind a beautifully created mask.

Islam was and is a call to liberate human beings from the tyranny of fellow human beings. It was and is a call to believe in those universal values given by a higher authority that sustains the entire universe and that promotes an environment of dignity, freedom, justice and peace. It was and is supposed to provide a sense of security to each and every individual regardless of his or her background, gender, class, faith and age. Islam's five pillars reinforce these values. The life of the Prophet (s) demonstrates the practicality of these values and the Jihad or struggle is primarily to protect and sustain and cherish them.

These universal values of Islam have been pushed in the background with each group of Muslims promoting its superiority over the other. Look at the issues the Muslims are engaged in their public life. Should a month begin on the basis of the observable pattern that humanity has known for millions of years or must a naked eye sight the moon before a new month can be declared a new month? Should the traditions of Prophet Abraham (as) be lived through sacrificing millions



French UMP political party deputy Herve Mariton attends a debate on Palestine status at the National Assembly in Paris November 28, 2014. French lawmakers are set to hold symbolic parliamentary votes over the next month on whether the government should recognise Palestine as a state, a move likely to anger the Jewish state. France does not classify Palestine as a state, but says it could extend recognition if it believed doing so would help promote peace between the Palestinians and Israel. REUTERS/Charles Platiau

France

from pg 1

The text, proposed by the ruling Socialists and backed by left-wing parties and some conservatives, asked the government to "use the recognition of a Palestinian state with the aim of resolving the conflict definitively".

Neither Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius nor Prime Minister Manuel Valls attended the vote in parliament. The government has said it will not be bound by the result.

"We don't want a symbolic recognition that will only lead to a virtual state," Europe Minister Harlem Desir told lawmakers in reaction to the vote. "We want a Palestinian state that is real so we

want to give a chance to negotiations."

Palestinians say negotiations have failed and they have no choice but to pursue independence unilaterally.

"Israel believes that the vote ... will only jeopardize the possibility of reaching an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians," Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon said.

"Such decisions only toughen the Palestinian positions and send a wrong message to the leaders and peoples of the region."

Fabius said on Nov. 28 the status quo was unacceptable and France would recognize an independent Palestine without a nego-

tiated settlement if a final diplomatic push failed.

He backed a two-year time-frame to relaunch and conclude negotiations and said Paris was working with Britain and Germany on a text that could be accelerated if a separate resolution drafted by Palestinians is put forward.

The vote in Paris has raised domestic political pressure on France to be more active on the issue. A recent poll showed more than 60 percent of French people supported a Palestinian state.

France has the largest Jewish and Muslim populations in Europe and flare-ups in the Middle East tend to aggravate tensions between the two communities.

of animals annually while over one billion people sleep hungry or should the resources be spent on sacrificing animals. Should the religion be used to promote despotism or be used to change the conditions of the helpless and powerless. Should one remain focused on one's spiritual growth or should one stand for justice for all? Should one insist on the validity and legitimacy of shia over sunni or Hanafi or Shafi'i, Maliki or Hanbali over each other or should we all make an effort to find common grounds in living their faith. Should non-Muslims be terrorized to believe in the authenticity of Islam or should love and compassion be the norm? Should women be evicted from the places of worship or should proper arrangements be made to secure their dignified participation in community affairs? These and many others are the issues that the gatekeepers of Islam do not want to get resolved. They want to perpetuate the differences and prove their superiority over the other. They avoid real issues by focusing on the patterns of wudu or the perfectness of prayer or the proper donning of hijab etc or even the correct pronunciation

of the Quran without understanding its message. This class of leadership has imposed an agenda on the community that is neither real nor complete.

Rather than making efforts to address critical issues and involve people in process of decision making, they tend to impose their subjective will.

No one should confuse the pattern of such leaders with the genuine contribution great scholars of Islam has made. However authentic and profound their contribution was, it was not the final word on the subject. They did not say so, but their blind followers have turned it like that. The Prophet himself (s) warned against this class of people and Allah described such people not only an enemy of people but any enemy of God also.

It is this situation that has been taken advantage of by groups like ISIS and al Al-Qaeda and their backers to create more confusion among Muslims and lure young Muslim mind to a path of destruction. Rather than exploring the world and understanding the universe to secure a brighter future of humanity, the young Muslims have been given

verbal explosions to destroy them and others. Rather than increasing knowledge and making it more beneficial for the humanity, they are told to shun the world. Rather than being humble, they are told to be arrogant in believing in what they believe in.

It is a critical time for Muslims. If they continue to blindly follow the clergy, or clerics or those who describe them as religious scholars, they would not be able to come out of the depth of abyss they are in. Every idea presented to us by anyone must be critically examined on the basis of its legitimacy and usefulness. People should be educated rather than preached. They should be empowered with the knowledge objectively of their faith and be explained properly to serve humanity as a whole. They are the most productive sector of human society. Their qualities should not be used for trivial causes to promote a sect or a faction. Rather, they should be involved in the mainstream based on one's own abilities with full integrity and commitment to those universal values that are eternal and that alone would secure the future of the world.



F	I	L	U	F	V	R	M	F	U	M	S	I	T	E	N	G	A	M	S	Z	S	K	D	S
P	C	U	R	R	E	N	T	J	M	Z	T	X	N	I	I	T	S	F	I	A	C	J	C	N
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T	S	K	V	H	B	F	F	T	Q	S	L	A	I	R	E	T	A	M	D	O	Y	M	F	Z
D	J	K	S	V	D	C	D	K	H	V	N	L	J	M	T	A	B	P	F	O	N	M	R	E
E	T	L	X	N	D	E	N	N	M	E	V	Y	S	S	A	P	M	O	C	G	O	Y	X	Q
C	R	E	L	C	K	Q	R	E	P	E	L	D	B	N	K	F	O	M	N	O	R	T	H	O
O	I	X	G	A	C	P	Q	X	G	Z	J	G	P	O	M	E	L	N	B	A	D	N	K	T

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STEEL

Why onions make you cry!



A force is a push or pull on an object as a result of its interaction with another object. As Newton's third law states: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. This means that in every interaction, there is a pair of forces acting on the two objects. The size of the forces on the first object equals the size of the force on the second object. The direction of the force on the

first object is opposite to the direction of the force on the second object. Forces always come in pairs - equal and opposite action-reaction force pairs. For example, when you pull on a rope, the rope pulls back against you; when gravity pulls you down against the ground, the ground pushes up against your feet. Some people ask why the two forces don't cancel each other out since they are equal and op-

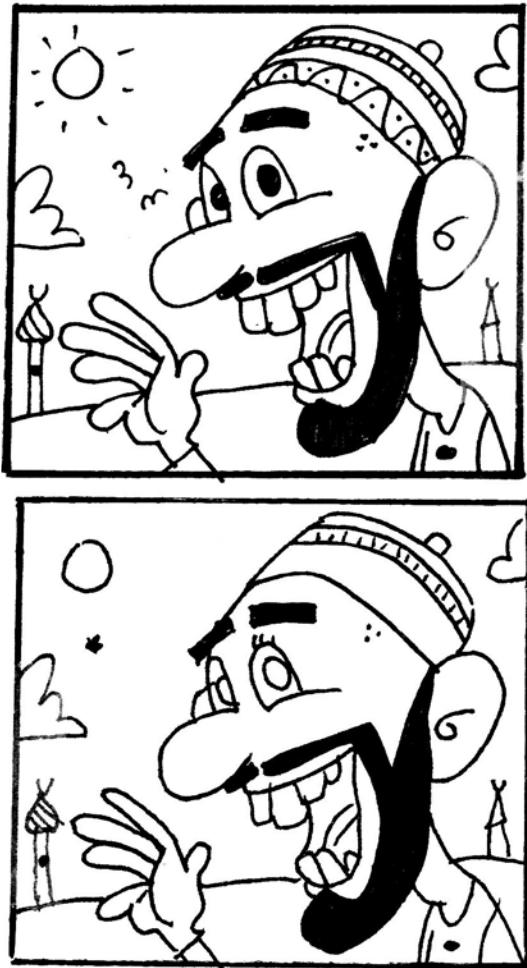
Jigsaw-doku



Rules: Draw one of each tile in every row, column and box Ask your parents if you want, for help with this puzzle--solution on page 8...

posite. In some cases, they do cancel each other out. Another example is a book resting on a bookshelf. The weight of the book pushes down on the bookshelf, while the bookshelf pushes up on the book with an equal and opposite force. The forces then cancel each other because the book isn't accelerating.

Find 7 differences



- (1) hat, (2) eyes, (3) eyelashes, (4) birds, (5) bug, (6) sun rays, (7) minaret.

Adventures of Salih!





Immigration

from pg 1

but he sure is acting like one.”

Addressing all Republicans who stood against his action, the President responded, “And to those members of Congress who question my authority to make our immigration system work better, or question the wisdom of me acting where Congress has

failed, I have one answer: Pass a bill.”

There are currently an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. President Obama’s plan is directed towards the families, specifically the close to five million parents of U.S. born citizens and legal permanent residents. Those undocumented residents could

legally apply for jobs, but cannot vote or qualify for insurance under the president’s signature new healthcare program. This measure would apply to those who have been in the United States for at last five years. In his speech, President Obama said that the real amnesty here would be “leaving this broken system the way it is.”

Many in the Muslim Ameri-

can community agree with the President’s decision. “We applaud President Obama on taking this small step in the right direction,” said Imad Hamad, acting director of the American Human rights Council (AHRC). “Undocumented immigrants over the years have had their hopes raised then dashed regarding the possibility of a reform of the system that would enable them to stay and work legally in the United States,” he said. Hamad also believes that America cannot lead the world while trying to deport millions of people.

Dr. Abdul Rehman Nakadar is the founder of The Muslim Observer Foundation (disclaimer: he is also the CEO and Publisher of this publication), as well as many other non-profit organizations in India such as the Dr. Nakadar Institute of Knowledge. According to Dr. Nakadar, there are about 450,000 people from the Indian community here in America af-

ected by this policy change. Though “Muslims form an minuscule number of this group,” said Dr. Nakadar.

Following Obama’s speech, the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) released a statement applauding the President’s actions, while also suggesting action could have been taken much sooner. “Over the past decade, the majority of the country has supported immigration reform, all the while our elected officials have politicized the issue. During this time period, millions of individuals have been deported, which means thousands of families have been torn apart because of a broken process,” said ADC President Samer Khalaf.

Officials within the Obama Administration described the President’s actions as the biggest shift in immigration policy since the changes made by President Reagan in 1986.

Book

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she writes, “exhibits a daunting combination of contradictory factors that must affect any decisions made about its future. More than six and a half decades since its establishment, Pakistan has yet to reconcile its self-proclaimed Islamic identity with the imperatives of a modern nation-state.”

Ayesha Jalal is Mary Richardson Professor of History and Director of the Center for South Asian and Indian Ocean Studies at Tufts University. Born in Pakistan, Jalal was educated at Wellesley College and the University of Cambridge. Ayesha Jalal discusses *The Struggle for Pakistan* in this interview.

How did Pakistan become a major focus of your scholarly work?

As I explain in the Preface to *The Struggle for Pakistan*, I was a teenager in New York in 1971 and had difficulties reconciling the official narratives of the Pakistani state with daily news reports of atrocities perpetrated by the Pakistan army in East Pakistan. This led me to ask questions about Pakistan’s history and self-representations, which in time came to define my research interests.

What are the enduring myths about the founding of Pakistan?

There are many. But perhaps the most enduring has been the notion that Pakistan was created solely in the name of religion. This ignores the critical role of regional political dynamics, most notably in Punjab and Bengal, and has led to blanket justifications of giving religion a central role in the affairs of the state. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, had explicitly stated in his first speech to the constituent assembly on August 11, 1947 that religion had nothing to do with the affairs of the state and Pakistanis regardless of their religion or sect were equal citizens of the state.

What is the “two-nation” theory and how was it used to justify the establishment of Pakistan?

According to the “two-nation” theory the Muslims of India were always an identifiable community that had resisted assimilation into the Indian environment. So Pakistan was the logical culmination of this Muslim distinctiveness. This theory ignores the fact that several Muslims were converts from Hinduism and cannot explain why so many of the Faithful were left in predominantly Hindu India after the establishment of the Muslim homeland of Pakistan.

How is founder of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah represented in the official narratives of Pakistan? Is his vision for Pakistan relevant today?

Representations of Jinnah at the level of the state have depended on the agendas of incumbent governments. In the initial decades after independence, Jinnah’s political legacy provided the pretext for rejecting a theocracy run by the religious divines (priests). Under General Zia-ul-Haq’s regime in the 1980s Jinnah himself was transformed from being a Westernized secular lawyer-politician into a religious divine. This changed under General Musharraf’s “enlightened moderation” when Jinnah’s secular credentials were emphasized. The appropriation of Jinnah by all shades of political opinion in Pakistan is evidence of his ongoing relevance to debates about the present and future of the country. It is another matter whether these gestures are symbolic or based on substantive engagement with Jinnah’s thought and political practices.

Is the military too entrenched in Pakistani politics? How has the army misruled Pakistan?

The military is firmly entrenched in the political economy of Pakistan and remains the ulti-

mate arbiter of its destiny when it comes to defense and foreign affairs. Military rule in Pakistan has exacerbated tensions between the central government dominated by Punjabis and the non-Punjabi provinces. The breakaway of Bangladesh in 1971 was simply the most dramatic manifestation of the problems created by extended periods of military authoritarianism. There have been continuing tensions between the center and the provinces, most notably in Balochistan.

If Benazir Bhutto (assassinated in 2007) were alive and in office today, how might things be different in Pakistan?

Well for one thing the PPP (Pakistan People’s Party) would not be in the shambles that it is after a dismal show of governance between 2008 and 2013. Benazir was unequivocal in her opposition to militancy and support for the rights of minorities and women. Her absence from the political scene has constricted the space for powerful voices of moderation to influence debates on the pressing issues confronting Pakistan.

Are you optimistic about the future of democracy in Pakistan?

Pakistan’s turbulent history reveals that democracy, however flawed, is a necessity rather than a matter of choice. Military governments too have needed to give themselves a civilian face in order to claim a semblance of legitimacy. Even as it is grappling with religious extremism, regional dissidence and a swarm of political and economic challenges, this is the moment when there are appear to be some prospects of Pakistan leaving the state of martial rule behind.

Military regimes in particular have used Pakistan’s geostrategic location at the cross hairs of competing dynamics connecting South Asia with the Middle East and Central Asia to claim a pivotal role in international affairs. But

with the Cold War now over, the military’s ascendancy is more of a liability than an asset in negotiating global politics. How well a nuclearized Pakistan is able to make the necessary adjustments in civil-military relations will have large implications for its internal stability as well as global peace.

The 2013 elections marking the first ever constitutional transition from one elected civilian government to another is an important milestone in Pakistan’s history. Rejecting Taliban terror and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan’s edict declaring elections un-Islamic, the endorsement of democracy by the largest voter turnout in four decades was an encouraging sign. But the voters have also registered a stern warning: they want elected governments to urgently attend to the task of governance and will not hesitate to protest and vote them out if they falter and fail.

How can Pakistan shed its reputation as “a hub of extremism”?

(They can do this) by confronting the truths of history and changing the security driven narratives of national interest that have justified meddling in the affairs of Afghanistan and sustaining a proxy war in Kashmir to the grave detriment of country’s political stability.

A negotiated peace on the disputed border with Afghanistan and concrete steps to resolve the Kashmir conflict with India can go a long way toward helping Pakistan overcome its insecurity complex that has over the past three decades only created greater insecurity for its people.

A recent piece in *The Economist* noted that you believe America “should keep on engaging and funding nuclear-armed Pakistan.” Is it true? What should be America’s priorities in its engagement with Pakistan?

I did not propose that the United States should fund Paki-

stan and thereby perpetuate an untenable dependency relationship. What I suggested is the importance of continued engagement with a geo-strategically located nuclear state. Throughout the Cold War the United States provided more funding to military dictatorships in Pakistan than to civilian governments. In the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, American support for Pakistan was based on understandings with General Pervez Musharraf’s military government. The United States needs to recalibrate its approach to Pakistan and focus on helping strengthen the democratic process to ensure eventual civilian control over the military.

What can Pakistan learn from Turkey and Egypt as it charts its course for the future?

Turkey’s success in establishing a functioning democracy after a history of military authoritarianism is a model for Pakistanis seeking an end to the recurrence of military interventions. Egypt’s experience since 2011 is a telling lesson for Pakistanis who are struggling to overcome their own history of military authoritarianism but are disillusioned with the performance of their elected governments. Ineffective governments can at least be voted out of office unlike military governments.

Joseph Richard Preville is Assistant Professor of English at Alfaisal University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. His work has appeared in The Christian Science Monitor, San Francisco Chronicle, Harvard Divinity Bulletin, Tikkun, The Jerusalem Post, Muscat Daily, Saudi Gazette, and Turkey Agenda. He is also a regular contributor to ISLAMiCommentary.

Julie Poucher Harbin is Editor of ISLAMiCommentary.



Pope Francis gestures as he speaks with journalists on the flight back from Istanbul to Rome, November 30, 2014. Pope Francis said on Sunday that equating Islam with violence was wrong and called on Muslim leaders to issue a global condemnation of terrorism to help dispel the stereotype. REUTERS/Filippo Monteforte/Pool

Pope
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country bordering the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.
Francis took off his shoes as he entered the huge mosque, before bowing his head in prayer for several minutes, facing Mecca and standing next to Istanbul’s Grand Mufti Rahmi Yaran, in what a Vatican spokesman described as a joint “moment of silent adoration” of God.
A similar act by his predecessor Pope Benedict in 2006 drew criticism from conservative Catholics and some Muslims.
Several hundred people, many of them tourists, watched from behind police barriers as the

pope then walked to the nearby Aya Sofya museum, once the Christian church Hagia Sophia.
A group of school children waving Turkish and Vatican flags chanted “Long live Pope Francis” in Italian as the Muslim call to prayer rang out across the Sultanahmet square, the heart of Istanbul’s historic quarter.
“We must show respect for each others beliefs. God willing the pope’s visit will help in this respect,” said Halil Ibrahim Cil, 24, a hospital worker from Istanbul.
“We want to practise our religion in peace. We want people to understand Islam. We don’t want war.”

Islamic State insurgents have captured swathes of neighboring Syria and Iraq, persecuting and killing Shi’ite Muslims, Christians and others who do not share their ultra-radical brand of Sunni Islam.
The Blue Mosque, known officially as the Sultanahmet mosque, opened in 1616 and is the most famous in Turkey. Its popular name is a reference to the fine blue Iznik tiles in its main prayer room.
Francis was later given a rapturous welcome by Istanbul’s tiny Roman Catholic community when he celebrated a Mass in the city’s Holy Spirit Cathedral. Several thousand people from a

Saudi
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billion riyals in October.
Any drop in budget spending of, for example, 1 or 2 percent would slow economic growth but probably not dramatically, because the non-oil private sector has been booming. The sector’s annual growth edged up to 4.7 percent in April-June.
FOREIGN AID
Economists believe Saudi Arabia will be reluctant to cut spending on areas such as social welfare and housing because it views them as key to political stability. Similarly, its infrastructure projects aim to ensure long-term economic stability by diversifying the economy.
But the foreign aid budget could see cuts. Riyadh pledged \$22.7 billion to its geopolitical allies between January 2011 and April 2014, disbursing \$10.9 billion, mostly to Egypt, the IMF

has said.
“We think that the financial aid will be the first to be cut if we see a further decline in oil prices,” said Fahad Alturki, head of research at Jadwa Investment in Riyadh.
Reducing domestic energy price subsidies, which cost the government tens of billions of dollars every year, could also bring savings. As oil has dropped, Kuwait, Oman and Abu Dhabi have taken steps towards cutting subsidies.
However, economists say the Saudi government may still shy away from this reform.
“I do not think the current oil prices being low for only a few months will create credible pressure that will trigger any change in the subsidy policy. There needs to be a longer horizon for that to happen,” Alturki said. (Editing by Andrew Torchia and Anna Willard)

Catholic population of around 53,000 packed the small building and others watched from an outdoor courtyard.
He later went to a joint service with Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of some 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide. The main purpose of his trip is to hold a joint ceremony on Sunday with Bartholomew to renew their commitment to reunite the eastern and western branches of

Christianity.
Bartholomew’s seat remains in Istanbul, a vestige of the Byzantine Empire, even as his flock in Turkey has dwindled to less than 3,000 among a population of 75 million Muslims.
(Additional reporting by Dasha Afanasieva; Writing by Nick Tattersall; Editing by Ralph Boulton)

Business Opportunities

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Lincoln Park: Walk-in clinic very visible, long established, seeing approximately 40 patients daily approx. gross income \$800,000 asking \$250,000 for practice and \$350,000 for real estate.
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