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Groundbreaking poster scheme aims to tackle domestic violence



TO HIGHLIGHT Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Qld Eidfest Association has undertaken a project that targets communities from Muslim, Sikh and Hindu backgrounds. This brilliant initiative serves to bring the topic of domestic violence to the forefront, and tackle it head-on. President of Qld Eidfest Yasmin Khan said: "I believe this is a first for Australia and possibly the world, where these three faith groups have come together to work on a domestic violence project."

"It was important to bring these faiths together as their cultural traditions were very similar, especially across sub-continental countries, such as Pakistan, India and Bangladesh."

The campaign features a series of four posters that will be sent to every mosque, gurdwara and temple across Queensland and community groups that work with migrant women.

Launched last weekend at the Centre for Interfaith & Cultural Dialogue at Griffith University, by the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the Hon. Tracy Davis, the initiative has garnered much attention with the posters being sent around the world via social media.

The design and concept of the posters was Ms Khan's idea and they have been praised by community groups and the Queensland Police Service.

Chief Superintendent Allan McCarthy from Brisbane South Region said: "This is the best campaign I have seen in over 30 years of policing."

When asked about her choice of graphics, Ms Khan said: "I had the bangles image in my head and the more I thought of it I realised that

the image wasn't exclusive to Muslims, so that's when I went to the Sikh community. The more I thought of it, I realised the cultural traditions are the same across the three religions and it was important to portray a united interfaith front. If we can work collaboratively we can achieve so much more."

Some of the posters are being translated into other languages to gain a wider reach.

In an interview, president of QLD Eidfest, Yasmin Khan had much helpful information to share.

Shahana: What has the response been from the muslim community?

Yasmin: "For those who have seen the posters and were at the launch, it's been terrific — they've loved the posters."

"I have been asked to take the posters to England, and they've been sent around the world via social media. Everyone has said it's about time we grew up as a community and admitted that this scourge was happening and make an attempt to get rid of it."

"The rest of the community will be interesting, because they are being sent to every mosque, gurdwara and temple across Qld and I have grave doubts that our imams will put them up, even though the imams council have given their support. So I challenge our community to ask the question when they go to the mosque — ask to see the posters and ask why they're not displayed — this is far too an important matter to ignore."

Shahana: What about the response from other communities?

Yasmin: "The Sikh community have been very supportive and we are sending the posters into NSW as well because they believe it necessary to create the awareness on this topic."

Shahana: Why do you think victims of domestic violence in our communities are so seldom willing to report their abusers?

Yasmin: "Shame primarily, and embarrassment and for many of them, no social or family support. Also in our communities, inter-generational families could also cause problems especially if they all live together."

Continued page 10

Aussie educators speak at Zaytuna College Conference

TWO LOCAL Muslim educators, Dylan Chown and Gregor Shepherd, who recently travelled to the United States to speak at the Inaugural Zaytuna College Conference have spoken of the success of their trip.

Dylan and Gregor delivered their presentation paper, *The Islamic Education Experience: What Can Higher Education Institutions Learn From Schools?* at the conference in Berkeley, California, on April 5.

The aim of the Islamic Higher Education in the West – Challenges and Opportunities conference was to examine the emerging conversation about institutions of Islamic higher education with an eye toward challenges facing the community.

As is the case in Australia, both challenges and opportunities exist in the effort to establish Islamic education institutions in the West.

"We felt extremely privileged to be at Zaytuna College's Inaugural conference. We were well received and particularly enjoyed our tour of the college," Dylan and Gregor agreed.

"It was very heartening to see the progress made from the old Zaytuna to the new site on 'Holy Hill' as it is

known, right in the centre of the many other faith tradition seminaries in Berkeley.

"Our visit was primarily an opportunity to engage with other likeminded colleagues in the field of Islamic education."

"The global community of Muslim educators, particularly in the West, is growing and so will the capacity and potential for the future, God willing," they said.

Continued page 7



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Toowoomba Muslims prepare for Ramadan

Dr. Zaheer Kadwa

IT HAS been two months since Toowoomba Muslims celebrated the opening of their city's first mosque.

This momentous occasion was the result of many years of hard work and planning by Islamic Society of Toowoomba members (IST).

Alhamdulillah, things have been running quite smoothly and it is encouraging to see more worshippers benefiting from this facility.

This is especially true during Jummah salaah, as the number of worshippers greatly exceeds the mosque's capacity, and consequently many worshippers have to form rows outside. There is an acute to increase the mosque's size and the establishment of permanent wudhu facilities.

The IST is now fundraising to develop these facilities. Recently, the IST has installed a reverse-cycle air conditioning system for the Garden City Masjid, which will keep the worshippers warm in the winter months. Additionally, the IST and Imam Abdul Kader have been actively engaging with the public and other religious leaders to elevate the profile of Islam in the local area.

The IST has been carrying out preparations for Ramadan and many local residents and international student groups have been enthusiastically volunteering their support to host iftar. There is always a vibrant Ramadan spirit in Toowoomba, especially during the iftar and dinner programs.

InshaAllah, this spirit will be even stronger this year, given that the IST has secured its own premises. Worshippers now have the opportunity to take advantage of the mosque facilities and engage with its activities more intensely.

There will be nightly taraweeh salaah throughout the month and Qiyaamul-Layl salaah will be performed during the last 10 nights of Ramadan.

This year, the Islamic society will also be collecting zakat for local and international distribution. The IST wishes all readers a happy and spiritually uplifting Ramadan.

Author's note: The address for the mosque is 217 West Street. Please join us for iftar if you are in Toowoomba during Ramadan

Bosnian Flood Appeal

THE RECENT flooding and catastrophe in Bosnia has left more than half a million people displaced from their homes.

The Assistant Minister of Security in Bosnia, Samir Agic, says that up to 35000 people have been evacuated by helicopter, boat and trucks.

The situation in the country is dire and there is an urgent need for funds to help the needy.

A further complication as a result of the floods is the unearthing of landmines which are a further threat to the flood stricken population of Bosnia.

The Islamic Community in Australia has launched a campaign to raise funds for the flooded areas in the country.

All Muslims in the country are urged to donate urgently.

Donations can be sent to:

Mesihat Bosnian Islamic Council of Australia Inc.

BSB: 062184

Account: 10160949

Charities join for anti-poverty fundraiser

ON SUNDAY, May 18, Muslim Aid Australia (MAA) and Muslim Charitable Foundations (MCF) hosted the 25 Seeds of Goodness charity fundraiser at Michael's Oriental Restaurant, to raise funds for worldwide agricultural projects to eradicate poverty.

The afternoon's proceedings was compered by Junaid Ally who entertained the audience through a delicious lunch spread, and Hafiz Muhammad Khatree recited and translated passages from the Holy Quran to start the function.

The MCF and MAA officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work locally and globally for humanitarian aid and development.

World renowned expert, designer, and educator in the field of permaculture, Geoff Lawton spoke about eradicating poverty through the uniquely sustainable permaculture.

More than \$40,000 was raised at the event.

Fears over 'draconian' new anti-war laws

MUSLIM leaders in Sydney have implored the man most likely to become the next NSW police commissioner, Nick Kaldis, to avoid enforcing the Foreign Incursions Act — which makes it a crime to support the Syrian civil war.

The Foreign Incursions Act makes it a crime to fight in Syria or provide material and financial support to warring parties.

The highest official of Muslim religious law in Australia, Grand Mufti Ibrahim Abu Mohamed, hosted the closed meeting with Deputy Police Commissioner Kaldis, but has maintained silent on the matter.

Three people have so far been charged under the law.

Mr Kaldis was asked to tell his colleagues in law enforcement agencies and also federal politicians not to back the Foreign Incursions Act.

Mr Abbott made an infamous assessment of the Syrian civil war during the election campaign, which saw a push against supporting the fighting in Syria, saying "it often seems like a struggle that involves baddies versus baddies".

Dr Jamal Rifi — one of the figureheads in the Syrian diaspora who attended the closed meeting with Mr Kaldis — said Mr Abbott's remark angered him, and it was hugely insensitive to those involved in the conflict.

"Ordinary citizens have suffered; hundreds of thousands of people have died. There are millions that have been displaced inside the country and outside the country. How can he claim [this is a fight] between two baddies?" he said.

"No. There are a lot of goodies."

Dr Rifi said that the more he speaks out, the more likely he will be to attract the unwarranted suspicion of state or federal agencies of law.

A NSW Police spokesperson would not provide a detailed response on whether they had evidence of Australian fighters being sent to Syria.

From refugee to Liberal National candidate

IT IS the stuff movies are made from — a former asylum seeker who through hard work and dedication is now in the running as an LNP candidate for the next State election.

Leila Abukar arrived in Queensland as a refugee from Somalia and went on to gain numerous academic qualifications ranging from disability support and conflict resolution to international relations.

Ms Abukar, who has had a wide range of senior managerial roles with government, council and not-for-profit organisations, will run as the LNP candidate for Yeerongpilly.

She has a strong connection to Yeerongpilly, having worked and lived in the electorate with her two children.

More about Ms Abukar can be found on the LNP website and on her Facebook page.



Ramadan Message

**From David Forde
Independent Candidate for Stretton**

Ramadan Mubarak

On of behalf of my family and myself, I take this opportunity to wish all your readers, our Muslim friends and indeed the broader Muslim community, sincere greetings for the Holy month of Ramadan.

With Ramadan being the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, I fully appreciate how sacred this month is to you and your families. May peace be with you during Ramadan, a time that provides for reflection on what is important to you through the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

I look forward to continuing our very positive friendship.

**David Forde
Independent Candidate for Stretton**



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Aussie educators speak at Zaytuna College Conference

The pair said the conference provided an excellent opportunity to present their research to an esteemed audience and to share the challenges and opportunities within Islamic education in Australia and hear about those faced by their colleagues elsewhere in the world.

"This international network and the connection made with Zaytuna College, we hope, will ensure we keep up to date with developments in Islamic education," they said.

Dylan and Gregor spoke of establishing an Islamic vision based on an Islamic worldview as part of the foundational and development process of an institution.

They argued that to achieve the "Islamic" requires the purposeful enactment of this shared Islamic vision and evaluation of the enactment up against the vision.

Dylan and Gregor also shared research revealing the consequences of failing to post an Islamic vision for an institution. That is, an Islamic education institution that doesn't have any significant "Islamic" essence at its core, rather slogans, labels and anachronisms.

They said the outcome of the lack of any vision can result in graduates who have little to no social impact on either the Muslim or broader community.

They finished by challenging the audience with the statement: "Is this the extent of our Islamic institutions' vision? Or are we willing to go further and become positive and active, towards creating and assessing positive Islamic social impact?"

Finally, Dylan and Gregor spoke of a paradigm shift in Islamic education institutions from the narrow focus on academic results to holistic transformation.

Labor leader in hate speech pledge at Congress Anniversary

SPEAKING AT the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Anniversary Congress last month, May 27, Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten said he remains opposed to any weakening of the Racial Discrimination Act.

Member for Maribyrnong, Mr Shorten said he felt he needed to address the debate over Section 18C, because of concerns in the Muslim community.

"Labor is fundamentally and immovably opposed to any watering-down of the Racial Discrimination Act," Mr Shorten said.

"We are not interested in impugning the motives of the Government, indeed we have been at pains to direct our passion exclusively at the substance of the proposed changes," he said.

"Labor is fundamentally and immovably opposed to any watering-down of the Racial Discrimination Act."

Congratulating the boys and girls from the Islamic School of Canberra for their "marvellous rendition" of both verses of *Advance Australia Fair* to open the evening, Mr Shorten said it was a great pleasure to celebrate 50 years of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils – now known as Muslims Australia.

The historic event, a first for the Australian Muslim community, was attended by an array of political leaders and dignitaries including Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove and Lady Cosgrove along with Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services and representative for the Prime Minister Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, with the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Scott Morrison MP.

Mr Shorten said he was concerned by the "important national question" over Section 18C.

"Any move to weaken protections against hate speech is a most serious mistake," he said.

"It is a backward step that signals that this problem somehow isn't as serious as it was before.

"That somehow, in some way, the need to be vigilant, to jealously guard Australians from prejudice based on their ethnicity or race is less urgent.

"This is wrong. There is no place for bigotry, no place for racism, no place for hate speech in the modern Australia. There is no right to bigotry in this country.

"A modern Australia that is good to its diverse peoples, and delights in the different styles of eating, and clothing, and singing, and worshipping.

"And any proposition that the prohibitions against hate speech are 'anti-free speech' is disingenuous and a misreading of the law.

"Section 18C does not prohibit free speech, rather it provides protection from racially-motivated hate speech.

"If we neglect these protections, we risk ignoring the effect racial vilification has on an individual's sense of self."

Mr Shorten said the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils had, for five decades, served Australia's Muslim community and fostered cultural and religious harmony.

"No Government should ever make it harder for the people who contribute so much to our society and our economy to feel safe and welcome in the Australian community.

"Labor never will.

"I'm optimistic that our view will prevail.

"It's not a question of "if" the changes to 18C will be scrapped – but when they will be scrapped.

"Friends, I thank you for letting me share in commemorating your important milestone tonight.

"And I wish you all the best for many more successes – and celebrations – in the years ahead."

He said: "You are a leading voice for all Muslims in

SECTION 18C

The exposure draft has proposed changes to Section 18C, which at the moment makes it unlawful for a person to act in a way likely to "offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate" someone because of their race or ethnicity. The proposed change will see the first three — offend, insult or humiliate — removed, and the word "vilify" added.

Critics of the Section 18C changes say this will allow almost any form of racist speech because it doesn't matter if it offends, insults or humiliates someone.

Australia as one Ummah to both government and non-government organisations.

"Your golden anniversary is a tribute to the vision of your founders, those dedicated followers of Islam who set up school and prayer facilities here in Australia."

Mr Shorten said a multicultural Australia was not just a blackboard lesson in social co-operation, but a driver of national prosperity.

"In proof of this, we need only look at the people in this room.

"Business leaders like Ahmed Fahour and Talal Yassine, community leaders and leaders of opinion, moral examples, role models from all around Australia," he said.

"All of you contributors to a fair and prosperous, tolerant Australia.

"Thank you for what you do."

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Editorial

Welcome again to another issue of Australian Muslim Times.

The month of Ramadan is almost upon us. In the next few weeks, let's prepare, let's realise and learn the importance of this holy month. Ramadan is not just about abstaining from eating and drinking but a time to connect with Allah swt, following the five pillars with utmost sincerity and also working on our iman. Remember that Allah swt is Most Merciful.

In each Ramadan issue, we endeavour to cover different aspects of Ramadan. There are plenty of online resources where readers can find the basics of Ramadan. In this issue, we are concentrating on the deeper meaning of fasting and some of the challenges faced during the month of Ramadan. We have also interviewed several revert Muslims about their first Ramadan experience.

Domestic violence is prevalent in all societies and the Muslim community is no exception. Domestic violence is a taboo subject, so it is highly commendable to see an organisation such as Eidfest — under Yasmin Khan's leadership — taking steps to tackle this issue with a poster campaign we hope will create awareness and debate in all Muslim homes.

We need to talk about it. Unless we tackle it, next time it could be your mother or your sister who is the victim of such abuse. There are resources and support if you are experiencing domestic violence, whether it is physical or psychological. Don't hesitate to go to the

This issue, like many other AMT issues, has articles by women about women, but if you read beyond the fact that the subject of the article is a female, the topic is relevant to both sexes. Young, male readers can draw inspiration from reading about Nadia Saeed and Zuha Ali's participation in youth parliament. They are not covering female issues but education and arts and Aboriginal, Torres Straits Islands and Multicultural affairs.

Women and men spend endless hours on Facebook — it is not just a female thing, though some might presume that. We need to be aware of how our time is spent efficiently, keeping in mind our religious obligations.

A 2010 study from Carnegie Mellon found that when Facebook participants simply consumed a lot of content passively, Facebook had the opposite effect to the intended aim of social interaction, lowering users' feelings of connection and increasing their sense of loneliness. The article on page 15 encourages us to connect with God through His book on a daily basis in the same way we connect with our friends through Facebook. Facebook is a great tool for debate, interaction and learning but it can also become a great time waster if we are not conscious about it.

We welcome feedback from our readers. Please get in touch with us about this issue of AMT or if you have ideas on how we can improve our content in the future.

Also, if you would like to contribute to our paper, send an email to: amteditors@gmail.com before sending us the finished material. We take pictures at events — big or small. If you would like us to attend your event, please email us in advance so that we can send a representative to cover your event. Remember that if you don't let us know about your function, campaign, achievements or fundraiser, we won't necessarily know about it.

The Australian Muslim Times team wishes all our readers a very Blessed Ramadan Kareem



“(It was) the month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur’aan, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home), he must observe Sawm (fasts) that month...”
[al-Baqarah 2:185]



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Spirituality and wellbeing focus of Awareness Week

Aziza Helou
La Trobe University

SPIRITUALITY and wellbeing were the themes of the Islamic society of La Trobe University's Islamic Awareness Week held last month.

Held from May 5-11 at the university in Bundoora, all events aimed to help the public discover the link between Islamic spirituality, Islamic teachings and good health.

A La Trobe University Islamic Society (LTUIS) bake sale kick-started the event, with an Oh So Halal stall set up in the heart of the university. All funds raised at the bake sale went to the Abdul Aziz Helou Appeal, while the Oh So Halal stall offered remedies to the public in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Islamic Awareness Week 2014 was made possible through the hard work of the diligent committee of campus students.

"It's easy to host an Islamic Awareness Week if you decide to merely replicate events of previous

years, but we put in time and effort to try to bring something unique this year," a committee member said.

Undeniably, the highlight of the day was a panel discussion on psychological and spiritual wellbeing.

"The panel was a special experience for me. Interacting with sisters Saara and Monique was a truly profound experience," LTUIS vice president Aseel Sammak said.

The panel was led by the Nasihah Consulting group principal psychologist Monique Toohey and founder of Benevolence Saara Sabbagh.

The discussion progressed around topics such as the spiritual aspects of Islamic belief and the etiquettes of relationships. The milieu and discussion that evening was pleasant and informative.

"Students seemed to enjoy the events and I think this was particularly manifest during the workshop held on Tuesday. The audience listened attentively as

Julide spoke," LTUIS committee member Heba Bendak said.

The workshops provided students with an opportunity to optimise their health and wellbeing.

Tamer Eltalty led "Six-Pack Sunnah" for the brothers while Julide Turker presented *Am I Eating Myself Into Depression?* for the sisters. The workshops emphasised the importance of honouring the blessing of good health given to us by Allah.

"It was a great opportunity to meet new people with similar interests from different universities, without this event it would have been unlikely to occur," Heba said.

Wednesday night's trivia event attracted the largest audience as Islamic societies across Melbourne sought to win the quizzes.

After a lengthy evening of rivalries, tie breakers and excitement, La Trobe Islamic Society earned the winning title.

It is hoped there will be many more collaborative events between Islamic societies across Melbourne.

A La Trobe student said the event encouraged assimilation and friendships between Muslim students from different universities.

"The lecture was really informative," RMIT Islamic society vice president Sabrin Shiday said.

"I think we need more lectures like that... overall perfect!"

Thursday evening saw Dr Ahsan Abu Yusuf from the Hikmah Way Institute present a lecture about prophetic medicine. The talk revolved around aspects of prophetic medicine and focused on the wisdoms behind certain teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

"This was the best Islamic Awareness week we've ever had," a Latrobe student said.



LTUIS president Samir Helou helped to round off the week with a Friday Khutba that addressed the fundamental topic of spirituality.

The Khutba focused on the human's forgetfulness of God, which ultimately leaves the individual in a state of servitude to either one's carnal self or the propagations of society.

Finally, Islamic Awareness Week of 2014 ended with a farewell barbecue. The hard work and efforts of the committee members seemed to pay off.

"This was the best Islamic Awareness Week we've ever had," a Latrobe student said.

May Allah accept the efforts of everyone involved.



Principal defends decision to send home Muslim teachers

A FURORE continues to simmer on social media after a Christian school principal sent home two Muslim women who wore hijabs on their first day as student teachers.

As first reported in *The Courier Mail*, the two Muslim women, in their final year of studying teaching at university, were allocated positions to start their work placement at Redlands College.

Mr Bensley said he respected the two women's right to wear the hijab but felt it was inappropriate at his school, and had them transferred to another school to complete their placement.

He was quoted as saying: "I have a duty of care to ensure that those teaching at the College are actively supporting the Christian principles, practices and beliefs of the College."

He said he viewed the wearing of the hijab to be in direct opposition to the principles which the college upholds.

The story later made headlines around the world, with the UK's Daily Mail publishing the story, complete with pictures of women dressed in niqabs. This drew ire from certain Mail readers.

Dougal of Brisbane wrote: "This is intolerance!! (Your file photo is misleading as the girls in it have their faces covered a hijab doesn't cover the face) Is it legal to prevent someone from working on the basis of their religion??"

"Why have the school not stated to the education department that they are intolerant of other peoples beliefs and won't

accept students or employees who think differently from them. That saves any other students or prospective employees from turning up, wasting their time and effort for this school."

AMT decided to find out what its loyal readers thought. So we posted this question on our Facebook page:

What are your thoughts on this? Did the principal act wrongly?

Here are some of your views:

Hamza Surbuland: "I don't think this is the right step. I was school captain of a Catholic School in my final year and there were very little problems. The principal even let me pray in his office. Seems like more personal prejudice on the part of this principal."

Maryam El: "I'm currently doing my prac at a Lutheran school and am quite pleased that they've accepted me with my hijab. I emailed them before starting so that they were aware — they were very pleased to have me. HOWEVER, in saying that, I have asked how realistic it is of me to expect to be offered a position there and they've told me that they only employ people who belong to the Christian faith. Fair enough."

Bilal Rauf: "A sad example of narrow-mindedness. Presumably the teachers would assist in teaching so-called secular subjects and not scripture classes. I await to see if the school stamps out intermingling between different religions at the school itself — a logical next step. Where does one draw the line?"

Dr Syed Fasihullah

MBBS (Dow), DCH (Glasgow),
FRACP

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Wishing you a blessed Ramadaan and Joyous Eid



Australian Muslim Times has teamed up with Mspiration, a blog featuring interviews with inspiring Muslim from Australia and overseas. The creator of Mspiration, Saeed Saeed is an Australian writer and journalist currently residing in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates.

"I feel blessed to collaborate with the Australian Muslim Times," Saeed said.

"The aim of Mspiration is to share people's stories of hope, triumph and overcoming adversity with the goal of helping and inspiring others. The Australian Muslim Times have a similar vision, so to partner with them is a great opportunity to contribute on a bigger scale. I look forward to hearing and writing your stories."



Dr Bilal Philips: On Gratitude

Saeed Saeed
Mspiration

Islamic Online University Chancellor Dr Bilal Philips speaks to Mspiration on ways to instil more gratitude in our lives.

YOU suggest that for a Muslim, being grateful to Allah is the beginning and end.

Surat Al Fatiha begins with Alhamdulillah, that is telling you this is where we have to begin. If we cannot capture and actualise Alhamdulillah then we will have miserable lives filled with anger, jealousy and depression. Alhamdulillah is the saviour. There are so many statements in the Quran like "if you are thankful I will increase with what you give thanks in" and the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said "verily the affairs of the Muslim is amazing and that is only for the believer. Whatever good comes to him he is thankful to Allah." Being grateful is really at the bottom of everything.

What does being grateful entail?

Being grateful begins with realising Allah's bounties and blessings which is found in every aspect of our lives. It is about being able to see the bounties even when it doesn't appear visible. It is an expression in our belief in the Qadr (unseen), the belief in the day of judgement and all of it points to the state of blessings which exist in all part of our lives. That's why the Prophet PBUH said "don't look at those above you, but those below you" because it's better to be thankful to Allah for the blessings in your own life.

How does gratefulness affect our faith?

It links back to the consciousness of Allah, what we call Taqwa. Gratitude comes as a result of Taqwa. There is an interlocking, interrelated relationship between the two. The consciousness of Allah helps us to be able to finding gratitude in spite of the challenges. It gives us assurance that even though we may find ourselves in difficult circumstances, ultimately it is for our betterment and there is good in it for us. So it is a



matter of being patient with the trials, looking for the good and accepting it even though we can't see it.

Is it tough to to attain a sense of gratefulness when we are living comfortable lives?

That is the real trial, to be grateful in times of ease. It is very easy to loose sight of the realities when you are so locked up in your own personal pleasures and enjoyment and forget to be grateful. That is what happens, people just go astray or go to extremes and abuse themselves and loose track of what is happening to themselves or their society.

Is being grateful an active task?

You have to live it. It is not a philosophical, ideological or intellectual concept. It has those elements to it but in the end it becomes something that you have to live. Your lifestyle or approach to life has to reflect it and if it doesn't it just remains knowledge which is of no benefit.

What are some practical steps we can take to foster this sense of gratefulness to Allah SWT?

The beginning point is being aware of God. As Muslims we try to heighten that awareness by reading more Quran because that is your direct communication with God. That is God talking to you and in one way or another God is talking to you about gratitude. Then there is reading the life of the Prophet PBUH and seeing how his life reflected gratitude. It is also good to have

around you grateful people because we are reflected by our environment. People who are always complaining that nothing is right and that there are problems will affect you and your own sense of gratitude will be destroyed by them. So you may have to move away from some of your friends and find other people who have a more positive outlook on life.

You also recommend Muslims to follow the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) sunnah of Sujood Al Shukr, where he would prostrate in gratefulness at a new blessing.

Sometimes I would sit in a room of hundreds of people and I would ask them who made Sujood Al Shukr in the last week? One hand would go up. Some would not even know what it is even

though the Prophet done it all the time. Whenever good things came to him, the first thing he would do is drop down, prostrate and thank Allah. Bringing that back to life is always something I advise in my khutbas.

What are the steps to making Sujood Al Shukr?

For one thing you don't have to have wudu (ablution) and you don't have to worry if you don't know where the qibla is. Start off (whilst prostrating) with the standard Subhan Rabbi Al A'alah (Glory to my Lord, the Most High) and other dua's the Prophet PBUH has made and then address the issue Allah has blessed you with. Express your thanks to Allah for what He has given you because you are closest to Him when you are giving sujood.

How can we maintain a grateful mindset in times of distress?

The advice the Prophet PBUH said that whenever good comes to you is to be grateful and whatever difficulties comes is to be patient. It is through patience that gratefulness becomes manifest. It is not to say that you stepped on a thorn and it is stuck in your foot and you say "Alhamdulillah". You are in pain and suffering. But instead going of the other side and saying "God damn it" we hold our tongue and say "Inna Lil Lah and Ilaihi Rajioon (Surely we belong to God and to Him shall we return)" or "SubhanAllah (Glorious is God)". Those kinds

of expressions engender within us gratitude because remember what the Prophet said: "every pain a believer suffers is in fact a means of purification from sins."

Some would respectfully argue that this is easier said than done

I remember when I first accepted Islam I went back to Jamaica to see if there was any Muslims down there, this was back in 1972. I couldn't find any in Kingston and my cousins told me to go this place near Kingston because they said somebody built a mosque there. So when I got there I realised it was a temple. So we kept looking around and somebody said go to Spanish Town. So we went there and found an old guy of Indian origin and he built a mosque on his land and he was dying of cancer. He couldn't even come in to the mosque. I thought to myself, at that time, wow, here is this man who helped people accept Islam. He done this good thing and there he was suffering. I thought this was like punishment for him and I thought, why him? Later on when I learned more about the deen I realised in suffering there is purification. So Allah was purifying him before he left this world. So he died from cancer. It was painful for him because in Jamaica the access to the kind of drugs normally available in the west wasn't available. That was an eye opener for me and a lesson in purification. So can we really say "I don't deserve this?" What we should be telling ourselves is why not me? Because I haven't lived that perfect life where I didn't commit any sins or errors. So who am I to complain?

What comes first, patience or gratitude?

It depends on the circumstance. The scholars describe them as the two wings of faith. Neither one can function without the other. Gratitude needs patience and patience needs gratitude.

Finally, is it the case in that the more you are grateful the more you will see things in life to be grateful about?

That is what Allah promises. The more you are grateful to Him then the more he will increase you in the things you are grateful for. You will have more things to be grateful about.

Dr Philips is the chancellor of Islamic Online University. Launched in 2007, the initiative offers a free diploma program in Islamic Studies in addition to a fully accredited tuition-free Bachelor's program.

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From page 1

Groundbreaking poster scheme aims to tackle domestic violence

"If a victim calls the police and they take away the perpetrator, then the victim is sometimes left with her in-laws, who start another cycle of abuse on the victim."

Shahana: Do you think family members, friends and neighbours have a bigger responsibility to report domestic violence, and where do they go for help?

Yasmin: "Well the message in this campaign is don't let concern become regret. If you have a suspicion, or know of someone suffering DV, then ring the DV hotline, who can then give you information and help on what to do to help the victim."

"If you know of extreme cases or witness it, then ring the police. And it's no good having the attitude that you don't want to get involved, always remember the victim — she could be your mother, sister or daughter. We go around calling each other sister, so remember that next time you see a woman in distress."

Shahana: What can the public do to help lessen dv and increase awareness?

Yasmin: "Make the call! The more the crimes are reported, the more it sends a message to the perpetrator that it's not going to be tolerated. And the more we talk about it, the more the victims know that we as a community are serious about supporting them."

"Hang the posters up to create awareness and a talking point; imams need to step up and talk about it in their khutbahs. We are also starting a support centre or drop-in centre, for those experiencing DV to get these women some help. Initially it will be volunteer support and we are calling all social workers, psychologists, counsellors, etc, to give us some of their expertise in helping victims."

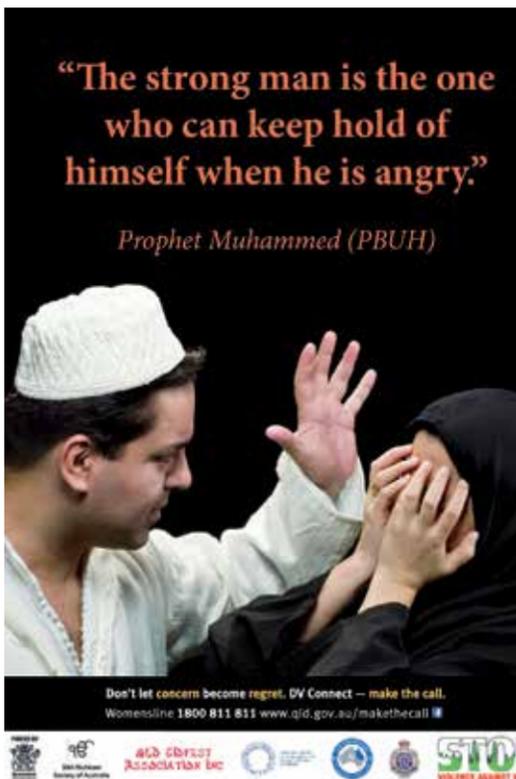
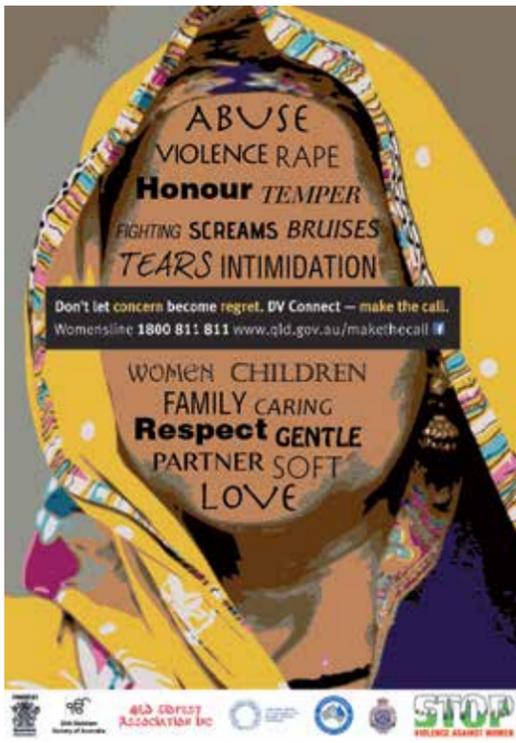
"Domestic Violence is often thought of as being mainly about physical abuse of a woman by her male partner, but there is more that needs to be understood about the true nature of Domestic Violence. DV occurs when someone in an intimate relationship uses fear to control their partner on an ongoing basis."

"It is about the abuse of power by one person over another in that relationship. It is gendered in nature, in that it is mainly perpetrated against women and their children, by men. In an effort to gain or maintain power and control and instill fear over another person, a wide range of abusive behaviours can be adopted by perpetrators of domestic violence."

"The only way to begin to eradicate this type of crime against women is to take away the power. Take away the control. Bring this behavior out into the open. Report it. Ask for help."

"And most importantly: raise awareness. Make it inescapable. Put up those posters. Mention it at brunches and lunches. Talk to your friends and family and ask if they have ever experienced DV."

"Domestic Violence is a serious problem in our communities, and burying our heads in the sand about this type of abuse has been failing wives and sisters and daughters in the worst kind of way. Maybe your sister or mother or daughter needs someone to turn to or share with but no one has ever asked. Be that person. Ask. And join this campaign to end domestic violence."



Saudi Arabia's top cleric condemns Boko Haram

SAUDI Arabia's grand mufti, the top religious authority in the birthplace of Islam, has condemned Nigeria's Boko Haram as a group "set up to smear the image of Islam" and condemned its kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls.

Nigeria's militant Islamist group Boko Haram — which has caused havoc in Africa's most populous country through a wave of bombings, assassinations and now abductions — is fighting to overthrow the government and create an Islamic state.

Sheikh Abdulaziz Al al-Sheikh, Saudi Arabia's grand mufti, said: "This is a group that has been set up to smear the image of Islam and must be offered advice, shown their wrong path and be made to reject it," he told the Arabic-language newspaper *al-Hayat* in an interview.

"These groups are not on the right path because Islam is against kidnapping, killing and aggression," he said. "Marrying kidnapped girls is not permitted," he said.

His remarks came as religious leaders in the Muslim world joined in denouncing Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau for saying Allah

had told him to sell off the kidnapped girls as forced brides.

Shekau's video sparked a wave of revulsion in Nigeria and abroad and prompting offers of help from countries such as the United States, Britain and France to search for them. The group has led a five-year-old insurgency with the stated aim of reviving an Islamic caliphate in modern Nigeria, whose 170 million people are split roughly evenly between Christians and Muslims

Boko Haram militants kidnapped some 250 girls on April 14 from a secondary school in Chibok village, near the Cameroon border, while they took exams. Fifty have since escaped. Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan has vowed to wage a "total war" against the militant group.

Islamic scholars and human rights officials of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation — the world's largest Muslim body representing 57 countries — denounced the kidnapping as "a gross misinterpretation of Islam".

This week, Al-Azhar, the prestigious Cairo-based seat of Sunni learning, also said that the kidnapping "has nothing to do with the tolerant and noble teachings of Islam".

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Steps to prevent threat of homelessness

Junaid Mustapha

SOME OF you may not know, but many in our community are facing homelessness. Prior to working in this field, I was not aware of the situation that many in the community face, or the severity of their situation.

Recently I attended a forum where one of the State Government representatives pointed out "that Homelessness is closer than you may think. Most of us are only four pay cheques away from it".

This is something to think of, as most may feel it could never happen to them. After dealing with those experiencing homelessness, you realise how quickly your living circumstances can change.

In this article I would like to highlight some of the current issues and solutions for people.

What are some of the biggest challenges people are facing

There are three basic things in regards that a landlord wants.

1. Pay the rent on time
2. Take care of the property
3. Keep the neighbours happy

These may seem simple but number one about paying the rent on time seems to be increasingly difficult for people to maintain.

Additionally if you don't maintain the home they want and keep the neighbours happy, you may be facing eviction very quickly. If you find yourself in this situation, what will you do.

Finding a place, even if you can afford it, is a difficult task, especially if you are renting.

Agents often receive more than 50 applications for each property. Their job is to act in the interest of the landlord. For a lot of Muslim families with children this is not always in their favour. Agents will generally choose their first choice as the couple with a good rental history, dual income and no children.

Additionally, first impressions have an impact. Go prepared as though it is a job interview. Dress neatly, have ALL of your paperwork ready and try not

to go with your children as it is distracting for you and the agent.

Now, if you cannot afford it, this is even harder. One of the main issues faced, is that there is not enough affordable housing available. To find properties under \$300/week is becoming very rare, and if you are on income support, you may only be getting around \$250/week for all your living expenses, not just the rent. Additionally the Government is restructuring the Government housing scheme, and if you have ever been on a waiting list you may know that it takes years before you are allocated a house to live in.

Situations can change very quickly, from the time things are OK, to when you find you are not managing. Take the example of a person renting, you may have a break-up in your relationship, or your child who was helping financially has moved to their own place and suddenly you cannot afford the rent anymore.

Or you may only get one month's notice that they need to leave. This is a very short time frame to receive notice to leave, find a new place, and then co-ordinate the moving into a new home. Even if you own your home, this one-month time frame is a very quick process for the amount of work involved.

There are many challenges in Australia, and the structures that are in place. Here, you don't always have the solutions available in other countries, such as multiple families sharing the expense of a house.

Only the people mentioned on the rental agreement can be in the home. The pressures of living and maintaining the lifestyle in Australia can come with its own challenges.

Many people do not know what they are doing wrong when it comes to maintaining their rental agreement. For example, when your family comes to visit and stays with you, you may jeopardise your agreement.

The landlord needs to know if there are extra people living in the property as there is a limit on the amount

of people who can stay there according to your agreement. So check these kinds of things with the agent before it happens.

What are some of the solutions

Be prepared: early intervention is the best solution, do not wait until you become overwhelmed and feel that you cannot cope. Think about things when you are calm so you can come up with a good solution and cover yourself for the unexpected. Know that you may be able to dispute the eviction notice if it is unfair.

A common scenario is that your car may break down, you need to allocate money to repair it so you can get to work.

Don't under any circumstances use your rent money and fall behind in rent. Be prepared because life doesn't always go according to plan.

Have a backup plan: what will I do if I have to suddenly move. What are my support structures and plan so that I have a solution. What do I need to organise if I need to move, or who can help me move. How do I find a new place to live, what is the process. Can someone take care of the children so I can do house inspections on new places.

Know what resources are available:

Rent Connect officers at the Department of Housing — do go to see them. Contact www.hpw.qld.gov.au/ or Ph: 07 3405 0985

- Homeless Person Information Qld. Ph: 1800 474 753
- Tenancy Unions and Advocacy www.tuq.org.au or Ph: 1300 744 263
- Rental Tenancy Association (RTA) www.rta.qld.gov.au or Ph: 1300 366 311
- Bond Loans and rental grants, no-interest loans, emergency relief and advocacy
- Know about blacklisting, how to avoid it, how to fight unfair listings
- learn about agencies are out there that can give you support, like keng.org.au

If you require any further information, please telephone me on 0403 113 123

Strengthening our character and faith

Ramadam preparations with Surah Hadid

Dr Sadeq Mustapha

WHILE studying the Quran, Surah Hadid (57) distinguishes itself by conveying strong lessons.

It teaches spiritual humility, avoidance of arrogance and thirdly to be engaged with each other encouraging righteous behaviour.

In Yusuf Ali's translation and explanation of Surah Hadid we learn that Allah's power and knowledge extends to all things.

As Muslims we are advised to follow Allah's light and law direct, without doubt, fear or half heartedness, but with humility, generous charity and faith. Allah's light will guide and lead us to eternal goals and success.

Obey Allah's Apostle, strive and spend your resources and yourself in the cause of Allah. When you are crowned with success, humble yourself before Allah in sincere witness of His love.

The pleasure here in this world is deceptive, be foremost in seeking Allah and His good pleasure. Trust Allah, mere renunciation does not amount to Allah's service.

Allah's Grace is for all, devote all your love and your service for all.

We are highly recommended to study, reflect and contemplate on this powerful surah verse 1-30. This surah is full of literal beauty and rhythm. Our commitment and engagement is to strive in the cause of Allah to establish proper justice, a balanced righteous life and to be beneficial to mankind, we have to be firm and strong in our resolve, like the iron.

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Ramadan and the benefits of breaking the two desires

Shafiur Rahman
suhaiwebb.com

TO THE unacquainted, fasting for a month every year may seem like an odd and painful thing to do in the name of religion. Is there a rationale behind it? What are the benefits?

The Rationale of Islamic Law

Most scholars agree that much of Islamic law is based on a rationale which we can understand; there is a wisdom and reason behind legal rulings. They also agree that every single legal ruling *of shariah* (Islamic law) either brings some kind of **benefit** (*maslahah*) or wards off some kind of **harm** (*mafsada*). In *Madkhal ila Maqasid al-Shari'ah* by Dr. A. Raysuni, the author explains how Ibn Abbas radi *Allahu anhu* (may Allah be pleased with him) advised Muslims to listen intently whenever they hear Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (Exalted is He), calling "O You who believe," as He is either directing them to a benefit or warning them of a harm.

Muslim scholars recognised this underlying rationale and thus summed up the goal of Islamic *shari'ah* in one condensed sentence: "The attainment of benefit and prevention of harm."

Some of them reduced it even further: "The attainment of benefit."

Ibn al-Qayyim (ra) points to this fact: "The Qur'an and the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are full of rationale for legal rulings." He further affirms, "These rationales are to be found in over a thousand places (in the texts) expressed through various means."

Definitions of Maslahah and Mafsada

What exactly is meant by *maslahah* and *mafsada*? Imam al-Razi (ra) in *al-Mahsul* succinctly defined *maslahah* as nothing but pleasure or that which leads to it; and *mafsada* as pain or that which leads to it.

Imam 'Izz al-Deen (ra) b. Abd al-Salam in *al-Qawaid al-Kubra* further defines *maslahah* as

1. Pleasure and its causes and
2. Happiness and its causes.

He defines *mafsada* as

1. Pain and its causes and
2. Sadness and its causes.

Pleasure and its opposite, pain, allude to physical realities, whilst happiness and sadness allude to emotional or psychological realities. He further divided each of the above categories into those related to the earth and those related to the hereafter.

Fasting to Break the Two Desires

So what has this to do with Ramadan?

Fasting in Ramadan is also an Islamic legal command and therefore the act must have associated benefits and must somehow prevent harm. One of the purposes of fasting in Ramadan according to the Qur'an is to gain *taqwa* (piety) by training the *nafs* (self) in self-control.

Imam al-Ghazali (ra) called it "breaking the two desires":

1. The desire for food and drink.
2. The desire for sexual relations.

Although these desires are not actually intended to be broken literally or eliminated completely, as they are inextricable parts of human nature and we depend on these basic appetites for survival. However, they can be tamed, regulated and controlled so that the self can escape from being a slave to these two desires and protect itself from both temporal and eternal harm: pain and sadness – whilst striving to acquire both temporal and eternal benefit: pleasure and happiness. Amazingly, that is what the root word of *taqwa* literally means: to protect and save oneself from harm. The word to save/protect (*qua*) is used in the Qur'anic verse: "Save yourselves and your families from the hellfire..." [Quran 66:6]

The fact that a whole month is dedicated to taming and controlling these two desires indicates to us their significance to the spiritual well-being of man. These two desires are the most pleasurable and at the same time potentially the most destructive. They appear to offer the greatest immediate pleasure or happiness, but

they can also lead to greatest pain and sadness— both temporal and in the hereafter.

This is illustrated in the following *hadith*: "Paradise is surrounded by difficulties and the Fire is surrounded by pleasures."

But the "difficulties" surrounding Paradise only appear as harmful (*mafaasid*) in the sense that they incur hardship and pain; however they ultimately lead to a greater benefit (*maslahah*). Whereas the "pleasures" surrounding the fire are beneficial (*masaalih*) in the sense that they are enjoyable and desired; however, ultimately they lead to a much greater pain and harm (*mafsada*).

One of the major challenges of living in Western societies is the relentless all pervasive appeal made to these two desires. Food and drink is everywhere, in limitless varieties and consumed in fatal quantities. We are literally eating ourselves to death, and in the process starving other parts of the world. Healthy sexual desires are aggressively being targeted and distorted by internet porn, films, fashion and media advertising that is available everywhere to everyone.

Most people on a daily basis are in pursuit of fulfilling these two basic desires either through permitted means (*halal*), or through illegal means (*haram*). Islamic law distinguishes for us which is beneficial and which is harmful.

Fasting and its Rewards

Fasting is the ultimate training in strengthening our ability to control our most powerful desires. The ability to control and regulate these desires and the *nafs* is the essence of the test of life, in which Allah (swt) wants us to attain servitude to Him alone, as opposed to servitude to our base desires. Fasting trains us not only to keep within the permitted means, but it teaches us that even moderation within the initially *halal* means can lead to our harm and destruction.

Fasting is one of the greatest acts of worship, and one of the most highly rewarded – probably because it

addresses the very thing that will determine our eternal success or failure: self-control in accordance to Islamic law. The promise of high reward, or pleasure and happiness, motivates all sane human beings to strive for its attainment.

The month of Ramadan, amongst many other immense blessings, grants us the best opportunity to strive for attaining the self-control that will lead to eternal pleasure and felicity. Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (Exalted is He), guarantees paradise as a reward for the one who resists following his/her desires.

But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge. (Quran 79:40-41)

How Merciful is Allah (swt) who not only rewards us when we control our *nafs*, but He rewards us immensely whilst we are learning how to control our *nafs* in fasting. May Allah (swt) grant us all the ability to earn His pleasure and not waste this magnificent opportunity.

As Ibn Rajab said: "For every month that passes, you may hope to find a substitute; but alas, for the month of Ramadan, from where do you hope to replace it?"

Shafiur Rahman has a BA in Accounting and Finance. His Arabic and Islamic studies began in 1994 with scholars in the UK. In 2006 he travelled to study shariah at Ma'had al-Fath al-Islami in Damascus. He later moved with his family to Cairo and is currently studying for a shariah degree at al-Azhar University and pursuing private Arabic and Islamic studies. Shafiur Rahman is also a founding director of Angelwing Media and is currently working on translating several Arabic texts into English. Shafiur can be reached at shafi.ibntayyib@gmail.com

"O ye who believe!
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prescribed to those
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(learn) self-restraint."
[al-Baqarah, 2:183]

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From Facebook to God's Book

Maryam AmirEbrahimi
suhaiwebb.com

MANY OF us have an addictive relationship with Facebook. We check our accounts compulsively, multiple times a day. It is sometimes the last thing many of us do before we sleep and the first thing we do when we wake up; time flies when we're on it, and it can become obsessive.

Yet how many of us have an addictive relationship—have any relationship—with the Qur'an? This is the Book that transformed alcoholic, oppressive, baby-girl-burying people into callers for justice, defenders of the oppressed, soft-hearted, humble worshippers of the Lord of All the Worlds. If what is contained in this Book brought eternal peace to the hearts and freedom to the souls who were chained to the whims of their own desires, it undoubtedly can emancipate us from our own problems, heartaches and stresses. However, its ability to powerfully impact us may go a lifetime unrealized if we continue to decide that other relationships are more important.

Some of us want to establish a relationship with the Qur'an, but may find it... boring, difficult to understand, or simply not fast enough. We're used to status updates, pictures and vivid virtual conversations. We prefer fun captions and vivacious images. We prefer real people, an interchange of words and tangible friendships—or at least, Facebook friendships. A lot of us don't even really know the people we add as friends.

In reality, what we prefer is what the Qur'an already offers and more; it's just up to us to experience the paradigm shift, with God's help. Here are a few ways we can tangibly work to establish our relationships with the Qur'an and in doing so, elevate ourselves in this life and in the Next, by the will of God.

From Facebook to God's Book

What is it about Facebook or other forms of social or popular media that makes us come back, over and over, sometimes multiple times a day—at a minimum? Is it the novelty of reading ever-changing statuses or finding new pictures? Is it feeling appreciated when others comment on our posts? Is it the fun of

having instantaneous connections? Is it just boredom? Whatever it is, identify why we keep going back. Then, tweak our reasons for that connection and apply it to the Qur'an.

When we read stories about Noah, Moses, Jesus, Mary, Lot (upon all of whom be peace) — when we read about their struggles or the people who they called to the worship of God, recognize those as the Qur'an's updates. The conversations that God quotes in the Qur'an, the arguments of the people to their Messengers, those are all comments to posts in the Qur'an's feed.

Mary (peace be upon her) says something, then God Almighty responds. Jesus (peace be upon him) tells his disciples something and they all start liking and commenting his post. Moses (peace be upon him) posts on Pharaoh's wall; Pharaoh responds and tags his henchman and is finally completely deleted from Facebook—and the world—in its entirety. God's Book is more intense, exciting and novel than anything on Facebook. We just need to add it and tag it as our Best Friend.

Sometimes we find Facebook addicting because of our ability to interact with our friends. So let's find the Qur'an addicting because of our ability to interact with God. When we read God's Book and we want to like something, say *Alhamdulillah* (all praise is to God)! We'll get rewards and be increased in what's good (Qur'an 14:7). When we personally want to respond to a status, put up our hands and make *du'a'* (supplication)! Now, our comment allows for us to directly strengthen our connection with the One Who can hook it all up for us, Who can hear us and will answer us! When we read the descriptions of Paradise and Hell, know that Allah Most High is uploading images for us to focus on and be impacted by; when we're captivated or horrified by the image, comment through our actions! Do the actions which will include us amongst the ballers in Paradise and keep you from being in the excruciating fire. That type of commenting will bring everlasting results in this

life and the Next and, God willing, Allah *subahanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) will tag us as His homies in this life and the Hereafter.

Make the Qur'an Our Best Friend

Oftentimes, when we're sad or lonely, when we're bursting with joy or excitement, when we're apathetic or just need some down time, we post it. We let everyone know how we're feeling, what we're thinking, something that went down in our day or what we wished didn't go down. We often treat Facebook as a best friend; checking it and reconnecting frequently. Here's our opportunity to start shifting that connection; let's start calling Allah's Book our BEST FRIEND. With ourselves, let's start using the term, "Best Friend," for the Qur'an.

If we have a human best friend, think about the way we run to answer their call when we know they're about to tell us the outcome of a life-changing decision. Think about the way we laugh at inside jokes we post on each other's walls and comment on a million times over to the annoyance of all our other 'friends' whose feeds are overtaken by our conversations. Think about the way that we dial their numbers before anyone else's, knowing almost with certainty that they will pick up the phone and be there for our comfort.

Now, apply that same understanding of our best friend relationship to the Qur'an. If we take the Qur'an as our Best Friend, we'll run to it when we see it near, knowing it's calling us, ready to listen to whatever it wants to share for our own benefit, guidance and happiness. When we're distraught, feeling lonely or at loss, we'll go to your Best Friend, hold it to our hearts, open it and begin reading it, reciting from it, reveling in its mind-blowing empathy, its heart-warming sympathy, its perfection of wisdom which relates directly to our situations. When we're excited beyond measure; ready to jump through the roof because we finally got into that school, got that job, regained our health, going to get married to that dream person or had the blessing of a child, we're going to pick it up and shed tears of joy or words of elation with it, knowing that in

reality, we're going back to the One Who gave us all that we're excited about in the first place.

Like our best friends, we'll understand the Qur'an's inside scoop, its special messages and the guidance it shares with us because we have a special connection that no one else can gauge. Making the Qur'an our best friend begins with a paradigm shift; this is not simply a Holy Book; it's the pinnacle of our life, it's our first supporter, our constant companion, our guide, the keeper of our secrets—it's our Best Friend.

Building Our Relationship

Let's think about people we're friends with on Facebook; would we really know about all that's going on in their lives if they didn't choose to share pictures of their meals, their vacations, or post about their daily struggles and conversations? Would we really be able to keep up with that many people, some very close friends and some whom we may have met less than a handful of times, if we weren't in constant connection with them through social media- even if we weren't actually personally connecting?

But let's also consider our true best friends. The depth of our friendships likely didn't happen overnight; we become continuously attached to the person we've already connected with because of our consistent ability to reconnect and re-align.

Then what about the Qur'an? How can we expect to know our Creator if we do not even open the social media through which He reveals Himself to us? If we're willing to read through the posts of people we sometimes barely know, then what about reading through the posts of the One Who created us and all of those people? How can we develop a relationship if we are not willing to consistently converse with the One Who gave us the ability to speak (or sign) at all? How can we expect a depth of friendship to simply just happen with our loving Creator if we are not the ones taking any steps towards embellishing our relationship?

Yet despite the sometimes little attention we give it, the Qur'an's feed is always beasting, waiting to be our closest homie! Why? Because when we establish a relationship with the Qur'an, we are, in reality, establishing a relationship with the One Who created us and knows us best. He tells us, "I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he

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I don't feel Ramadan

Maryam Amirebrahmi

"I DON'T feel Ramadan," she vented. She, working night shifts and feeling exhausted throughout her days, expressed the same sentiment many others have during this Ramadan of long fasting days and short nights.

"I'm a mom of three small kids," a sister explained. "I have health problems and can't fast. If I can just get my prayers in on time, I'm grateful. I'm starting to get depressed because Ramadan is almost over and I haven't felt it at all."

"I'm taking care of my elderly parents and working long hours," he sighed. "Work is hard and being there for my parents is stressful, even though I love them. I was looking forward to Ramadan because I so badly needed the spiritual boost. But now it's here, and I feel worse because I haven't felt any spiritual highs. I feel guilty because I should do more acts of worship, but I'm just too tired."

Many of us have felt inadequate this Ramadan. Long hours of fasting with short nights have made it hard for those of us with life responsibilities or those of us who are unable to fast due to our health "feel" Ramadan. We have not been able to do the extra worship we used to and even when we get in our extra Qur'an or pray in the mosque we have trouble concentrating, so we end up just feeling lame.

But what we really need is a perspective shift.

We need to recognise that taking care of our loved ones, providing financial support for our families and taking care of our health are some of the highest forms of worship in and of themselves. We just need to make the intention and internally shift our perspectives.

Perspective Shift

Here are three action items for those of us feeling low mean (faith) this Ramadan:

Change your perspective

You are rewarded for your intention. Would have gone to *taraweeh* (Ramadan night prayers) but couldn't make it because of work hours and needing to get some sleep in? Couldn't read your planned Qur'an because of the kids who won't let up on your time for even five minutes? Couldn't fast because of your health situation?

Your life circumstances simply do not allow even the small amount of worship you so desperately wish you could partake in. Even if you do have the time, you do not have the energy to focus internally and feel the drive. You are exhausted. You feel depleted.

And that is where your intention comes in. You would be doing all you could to rake up the spiritual vibes if it were possible.

So, instead of lamenting your lameness, think of God's greatness, *subhanahu wa ta'ala*, exalted is He. In His mercy, He will reward you anyway for all of what you planned to do but could not. Think of the powerful words of the Prophet (peace be upon him), comforting all of us in this exact situation: "God ordered (the appointed angels over you) that the good and the bad deeds be written, and He then showed (the way) how (to write): If somebody intends to do a good deed and he does not do it, then God will write for him a full good deed (in his account with Him); and if he intends to do a good deed and actually did it, then God will write for him (in his account) with Him (its reward equal) from ten to seven hundred times to many more times: and if somebody intended to do a bad deed and he does not do it, then God will write a full good deed (in his account) with Him, and if he intended to do it (a bad deed) and actually did it, then God will write one bad deed (in his account)." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6491)

And if there was ever something you used to do but could no longer do it because of health or your

life situations, recognize that you are still being rewarded for it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) comfortingly told us, "When a slave of Allah falls ill or goes on a journey, he is credited with the same amount of recompense as he used to do in his state of health or when he was at home" (Sahih al-Bukhari 2996)

And that is why it is so important to take advantage of your time and health when you have it. Because once they are gone, you will still be rewarded for all of what you would be doing if you could. But that is the key—doing it when you can.

Drawing nearer to God happens through actions, not through feelings.

God tells us in a holy hadith (narration): "My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it..." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6502)

We want that "Ramadan feeling" because we get the spiritual high of feeling close to Him. That is essentially what we are craving for.

But here He is telling us that the way we draw close to Him is through the religious duties He has made obligatory on us and then through anything extra. He does not say: "You draw close to Me through a feeling you get and that's how you know you're actually close to Me."

We are so blessed that He did not require us to experience "a feeling", an emotion, something we have little to no control over, in order to be close to Him. He does not demand we cry out of love for Him everyday, even if that is what we want to do. He does not ask us to weep for our sins every minute, even though that is what we probably deserve to do.



He is empowering us to take action in managing our side of our relationship with Him. If we are taking those actions, we are already near to Him, God willing.

Take a moment and speak to Him.

Give yourself five minutes, just you and Allah. Sit and raise your hands and share what is in your heart with Him in your own words, even though He is well aware of it. Allow the burden of your frustration with yourself to be lifted off your shoulders and into His Hands.

"Dear God, I feel distant from you and it hurts especially because it's Ramadan and I want to feel close to You in this month. Please, accept all my sacrifices for Your Sake and let me taste the sweetness of our relationship together through what I'm doing. As much as I wish I could be in the *masjida* and concentrate when reading Qur'an like I used to do to get that *emanhigh*, I can't. But I'm doing whatever I can to fulfill the responsibilities You've given me in this phase of my life. So please, write me amongst the highest in Paradise, pour blessings into my life and let me taste the sweetness of my relationship with You through what I'm doing."

As our responsibilities pile up, so do our inability to focus on the spirituality we were banking on to experience in Ramadan. In the weeks prior, we were so anxious for this opportunity just to get spiritually tuned. And then once Ramadan gets here and we do not feel it, it is easy for us to sink into even more serious depression because what we thought would give us the boost did not work, so then we blame ourselves. We see ourselves as failures, so we assume that is the way He views us too. But our perception of our own selves is not a reflection of who we are in His eyes. His mercy overcomes any shortcomings of a believer who sincerely struggles to be close to Him, even when we fall.

Continued page 19

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Some Useful Facts about Circumcision

Q: *What is the best age for circumcision?*

A: The healing process is usually quickest for boys at one week old, and we have successfully performed circumcision on boys as young as 3 days old. At this age the baby usually sleeps for long periods after the procedure, healing is extremely quick with minimal risk of complications. We are able to perform the procedure on boys of any age. It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad (S) underwent circumcision at 7 days old ⁽¹⁾

Q: *What is the Islamic Significance of Circumcision?*

A: Muslims males undergo circumcision as it is an emphasised tradition (sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad (S), and the Prophet Ibrahim (AS). Abu Hurayra (RA) was quoted saying, "Five things are fitra (human nature): circumcision, shaving pubic hair with a razor, trimming the moustache, paring one's nails and plucking the hair from one's armpits"

Q: *What are the benefits of circumcision?*

A: Evidence suggests that circumcision offers protection from certain cancers for both the circumcised male, as well as his female partner. Circumcision can reduce urine infection by up to ten times in children under 2. The procedure eliminates risk of future problems with the foreskin including infection and non retraction, it is often advised to treat

these problems. Additionally, circumcision is increasingly being advocated in certain populations such as sub-Saharan Africans due to its success in reducing HIV and other diseases.

Q: *What are the risks of circumcision?*

A: Complications are very rare when the procedure is performed by a qualified experienced doctor. The commonly quoted risks include pain, which can be minimised with anaesthetic, and infection, which is quite rare with the plastibell ring method. Bleeding can sometimes occur, but stitches are rarely required. Some parents have concerns about the cosmetic appearance, again the plastibell ring method is very effective in leaving a neat scar. Other complications are very rare and can be discussed with the doctor.

Q: *How can I book my son for circumcision?*

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(1) Al-Halabi, Ali Ibn-Burhan-al-Din. Alsirah al-halabiyyah. Vol.1 Beirut: Al-maktabah al-islamiyyah. (n.d.): 54-5

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A mindful start to Ramadan

Fatima Issa

RAMADAN approaches once again — the most unique month that gives us the perfect opportunity to utilise mindfulness techniques to increase our inner spirituality and wellbeing.

Ramadan is a month noted by dedication to God, where our spiritual wellbeing tends to skyrocket for 30 days.

Through practice of mindfulness, we find that over time, our thoughts are less focused on labelling experiences as positive or negative, and we are less inclined to be consumed by thoughts of the past or future — rather we are living in the moment; and therefore we are able to truly appreciate the moment and show true gratefulness for our experience.

This means we are able to refrain from being quick to anger, as we develop a sense of non-judgment of the actions of others and ourselves.

As well as this, we are quick to show compassion and acceptance — which ultimately, makes us much easier people to deal with especially when we're hungry!

How can we utilise mindfulness in Ramadan? By utilising mindfulness techniques during Ramadan we can increase the level of spiritual well-being we experience. Some advantages are:

- Increased gratefulness for what we have
- Increased sense of inner peace

- Greater sense of compassion for others and lower levels of anger within yourself
- Greatly reduced levels of stress as you focus on the present
- Stronger and more intentional connection with God



Mindfulness techniques

Deep breathing

A common way to achieve a greater level of mindfulness and contact with the present moment is through deep breathing. This can be done almost anywhere and in under most circumstances

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes
- Inhale for 6 seconds, and exhale for four. Continue this throughout the session
- Forget about any worries about the future or the past, and bring your attention to the present moment
- Current bodily sensations
- The noises in your immediate surroundings
- The smells around you
- Your current internal feelings (do not judge or dwell)
- Allow yourself to witness your thoughts as they enter your mind
- Do not judge any thoughts you are having, simply acknowledge them and let them go, and then return back to the present moment

Continue being mindful

Often the very cause of our happiness and spiritual closeness comes from being grateful for what we have. Ramadan is perfect at pointing

out exactly what we have to be grateful for; it's hard to ignore just how fortunate we are in this month. However, when we're not confronted with such a significant signal as hunger, we may begin to forget once again

- Remind yourself throughout the day of the things you have to be grateful for
- Write these down in a list and truly appreciate them
- Give yourself time throughout the day to take a step back from everything that is happening and spend a few minutes taking deep breaths and connecting with the present moment
- Reflect upon your life as it is in the present moment
- Use this as an opportunity to forget about worries of the past or future

Be aware of your mindset.

A core aspect of mindfulness is being aware of our internal states; by being mindful of the way we feel at certain times we can do more to ensure we maintain it, and we can recognise when we are lacking in it.

How do we do this?

- Take note of when you are feeling good
- Consider why you are feeling good, and which actions contributed to it
- Recreate it



From page 17

I don't feel Ramadan

Be Easy on Yourself

So be easy on ourselves, as Allah (swt) is easy on us. As you speak to Him, remind yourself that everything you do can be an act of worship in which to draw nearer to Him.

Even the mundane can be worship. You brushing your teeth to follow the Prophetic tradition, to maintain the health of your body, to have great smelling breath for your loved ones and the angels who surround you, is an act of worship in and of itself. You smiling at your parents, kissing your spouse, texting a friend to brighten their day; all of those are acts of worship in and of themselves. Your entire life, your entire day, is filled with actions which could all be acts of worship, simply through your intention. The beauty of Islam is that it does not restrict worshipping God to praying, fasting and reading Qur'an. It can encompass your daily actions simply through your intention.

As the great scholar, Abdullah ibn Mubarak, is reported to have said: "Perhaps a great deed is

belittled by an intention. And perhaps a small deed, by a sincere intention, is made great."

You may not have felt that "Ramadan feeling," but you may have been doing the actions of someone close to God, someone successful both in and outside of Ramadan, simply through re-framing your perspective, remembering God through the actions you are doing, and renewing your intention through even the mundane.

There is still time. Renew your intention. Reframe your perspective. In these blessed nights, make your Ramadan worship something transformational. Choose to understand your relationship with God as one that will continue even when your life changes. Choose to magnify your intention.

Maryam Amirebrahimi has a strong background in leadership and is a passionate advocate for social justice. Currently, Maryam is pursuing a second bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies. Her first BA was in Child and Adolescent Development. She speaks four languages and is a regular contributor at suhaibwebb.com

From page 15

From Facebook to God's Book

makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed," (Hadith Qudsi, Bukhari). When we think about God, when we make an effort to draw nearer to Him, He comes to us with speed. Therefore, let us run to Him through our relationship with the Qur'an!

Here is how we can start: We can set a certain amount of Qur'an that we must read, regardless of the circumstances, every day. Make sure this amount is in a language that we understand. If we can read Arabic and understand some of it, then read the Arabic but also read a translation. God revealed the Qur'an in the language of the Arabs for them to understand it so that they can live by and be transformed by it. Thus, let us read it in a language

that will impact our lives, and let us do so daily. From 1 pages to 20, do whatever amount we can do consistently and stick with it because the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that the best actions are those that are small, but consistent (Bukhari). Reading the Qur'an daily, year-round, is better than reading a ton only in Ramadan and then disregarding it. How can a relationship flourish to its fullest if it is only maintained once a year?

Facebook can be a great networking tool, but if used obsessively, we can become addicted to a media which often brings minute tangible benefits to our lives. Allah's Book is an incredible networking tool which will connect us to the Creator of the Universe, the One through Whom we can gain tangible benefit in this life and the eternal hereafter. Let's go to Allah's Book—to our Best Friend—to the Qur'an—because the best "like" is when Allah (swt) likes your life.

"... Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him — those are the party of Allah. Unquestionably, the party of Allah — they are the successful." (Qur'an 58:22)

Were YOU there?

Would you like to see pictures of YOUR event in Australian Muslim Times? Email us at amteditors@gmail.com



Islamic College of Brisbane The senior students of the College presided over a very dignified and well-organised ceremony directed by Mr David Forde, president of the Sunnybank RSL. Dr Mustafa Ally handed the school a compilation of the diaries and documents of WW2 hero (Bob) Mohideen Abdul Ghias Howsan prepared by the Queensland Muslim Historical Society.



Grandson of Hussin and Rashida Goss and the first baby of Ghulam and Narmin Goss of the Gold Coast. Mr Goss thanked Allah swt that 'another auctioneer is born'. Alhumdulillah

Sister's House annual fundraising dinner was held at Michael's Oriental on 31st of May.



Swimming with sharks for Medical research

Big-hearted doctor Dr Yunus Solwa is helping daring swimmer David Forde to make a splash for charity in one of the most challenging swimming competitions in Australia.

For the second year in a row, Brisbane Diagnostics director Dr Solwa has backed Lions Club of Kuraby president Dr David Forde, who will be competing in the Magnetic Island to Townsville 8km open water swim.

The event is the longest open water swim in Queensland and this is the seventh year swimmers will compete (against the clock) without shark cages.

Mr Forde expressed his "deep appreciation for the sponsorship and support from the Muslim community".

Now in its 60th year, the Magnetic Island to Townsville 8km open water swim takes place on Sunday, June 15.

Proceeds will go to the Lions Medical Research Foundation, with an aim to beat last year's \$10,000 total.

If you would like to donate to the swim, please telephone David on 0413 874 008. All donations are tax-deductible and receipted.



Advertisement

Cr Kim Marx
Karawatha Ward

Lord Mayor
Graham Quirk

Thank you for your contribution to the community and I look forward to working with you over the coming year. Wishing you all the very best.

Eid Mubarak.



The month of Ramadhan is upon us, and I want to wish the Muslim community a peaceful and holy month of fasting. Ramadhan is a special time in the Muslim calendar and is an opportunity for all to contemplate and re-assess our lives. To the Muslim community who will be fasting, may your actions be rewarded and your intentions be grand. Ramadhan Mubarak. Councillor Kim Marx, Karawatha Ward.

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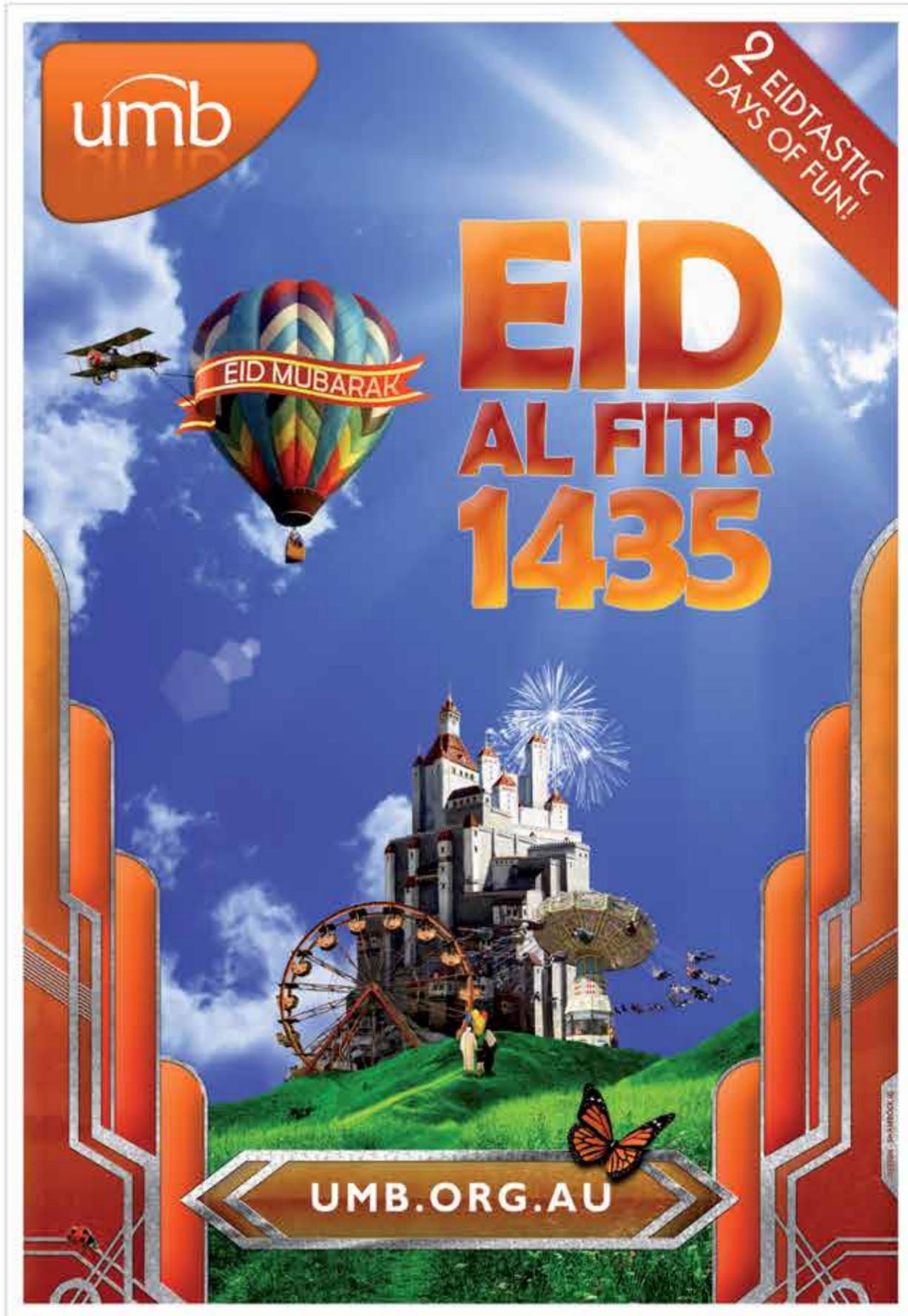
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It is the best way to show your children that in Islam we can have fun and worship ALLAH (swt) at the same time. We have so much testimonies from people that it is the best day of the year and that's how Eid should be!

Our volunteers at UMB have put in extra effort to organise the best Eid yet. Just wait and see what is in store for you and your kids!

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Assalamu Alaikum

Imam Jihad Saleh
President UMB



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Ramadan Reflection: Seek Support

Khalid Latif
suhaibwebb.com

Learning from the American Muslim community

TWO YOUNG women and a young man reached out to me respectively this past week, none knowing the others, but all having gone through a similar experience as children. Each had been the victim of sexual abuse at a very young age, and none of them had really spoken about it for quite some time. All three had at some point tried to speak with the one or both of their parents about it (one spoke only to the mother as her father was the abuser) and none had received any support or validation of their concerns—one was even told it's not a big deal. All three were told not to speak about it with anyone so each ended up holding it inside for quite some time.

Aside from these three, 108 unique individuals in the month of July have reached out to me on issues ranging from depression, anxiety, suicidal tendency, domestic violence, alcohol and drug addiction, sexual orientation, dealing with mental health disorders, marital issues, issues with parents, relationship issues, theological issues, and much more. They have corresponded in the form of emails, phone calls, and in-person meetings. These people are mostly from the NYC area, a good number from different parts of the United States, and the smallest demographic is from outside of the country. They are both male and female, diverse in age, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. All are looking for someone to talk to—most are finding a hard time in doing so.

In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with anyone seeing a counselor. I actually think it's an important thing to have someone to talk to. The difficulty for the Muslim community is two-fold. Primarily, it's hard for us at times to get the motivation and comfort needed to go seek a counselor and, secondly, in the instances that we do, it's hard to find someone who actually understands what we are going through.

It's not very common to find Muslims comfortable with the idea of speaking about what they have or are going through. Some think it somehow displays weakness of faith and is a form of questioning God, others come from cultures that don't appreciate or encourage seeking out such help. Many think it's wrong to "reveal sins" whether it be their own or those of others. Most have been in a place where when they have attempted to speak to someone about it, their attempts have immediately been shot down and it takes a long time before they can speak about it again or, unfortunately, they just don't speak about it ever again.

In the instances where one actually does find someone to speak with, they run into a few different types of people:

- An individual who is not trained to provide them the support that they need, but still attempts to do so
- An individual who does have training and/or experience to provide the support that is being sought out, but doesn't understand the diversity of Muslim experience, or anything about Muslim identity
- An individual who is not trained to provide them the support that they need, recognizes this and refers them to someone who is
- An individual who does have training and/or experience to provide the support that is being sought and, does understand the diversity of Muslim experience and Muslim identity

Most will find themselves in a place where they meet someone from one of the first two categories and get discouraged with the process. Our goal should be to enable and empower more people who are in categories three and four so that we can ensure proper care and attention to those who need it. Why should we do this? Because there is a lot of unreconciled pain in many hearts out there and it's not justifiable that we allow for

that to continue. The number of tears that I have seen shed in front of me and the amount of frustration and anxiety that has been let out afterwards tells me that the Muslim community is not a happy community, and that's in large part due to the fact that we are not healthy. It's unjustifiable that I stand in a comfortable place while I am fully aware that the person sitting next to me is uncomfortable or struggling on the inside.

I don't think the solution is simply in having more imams that are American-born, because that alone doesn't mean that they will have the training or experience to counsel someone. A young man came to see me with his female cousin who was walking in the hallway of her high school one day in between classes when a boy grabbed her, pulled her into a stairwell, and raped her. This young woman worked up the courage to tell her parents, who, not knowing where else to go, then took her to their local mosque, where she was told by the imam that she deserved what happened to her because she goes to a mixed-gender school and doesn't dress properly. Aside from recognizing the stupidity of this statement, why is this person even in a place where he would be dealing with circumstances like this? And what do we think it did to the young woman? She will take what this man has said as being what Islam says, which is not the case, and more importantly then that, she is going to hurt even more on the inside then when she had first come in.

Education is key, and training current religious leaders as well as mental health professionals, whether they are Muslim or not, on issues relevant to the Muslim community is essential. The stereotype that paints the Muslim community as monolithic is most problematic here because it keeps us from being in touch with how diversity plays a role in proper counseling. Not all Muslims are the same and dealing with them means understanding that one will be different from the next, even though they adhere to the same faith.

Despite this, there are many out there who are trained, attuned to the realities that Muslims are facing, and are great resources. If you find yourself in a place where there is something that you need closure on and feel like talking about, whether you are going through it now or went through it a long time ago, don't let yourself think you have to go through it alone. It is not a weakness of faith to seek support from the people around you. The companions of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, sought support from him in this manner all of the time. Young and old, male and female, Arab and non-Arab all spoke to him about things that they had going on inside and he listened. He heard them out, helped them to make critical sense of it and set out on a path to reach their potential best. People who had addictions,



bereavement issues, relationship issues, mental health issues, victims of domestic violence, people who had to deal with the realities that race, ethnicity, gender, and privilege all brought, and many others came to speak to him about what was going on in their respective lives, and he listened. He also turned to those around him at times when he needed counsel and advice. If we require religious legitimacy to seek support when we need it, undoubtedly Islam tells us we are allowed to and that we should.

You don't have to speak to just anyone. Find someone you are comfortable with and will hear you out before simply telling you what you should do. Not every religious scholar will be able to play this role, nor should they be expected to be. It's not a shortcoming on their part by any means. Professional help in the form a psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker is also important and should not be looked at as a bad thing. Just like a doctor is there to help us be physically well, these individuals are there to help us be emotionally well, which in turn has the potential of aiding in our spiritual growth.

For those of you who are not in a place where you need this kind of help, be mindful that there are those who do. If you are speaking to an audience, understand that audience has many people in it that have lived lives that may not have had the best of experiences. Not everyone has good parents, not everyone has Muslims in their families, not everything is a test from God, forgiveness is not always the easiest thing to do, and it is not a weakness of faith to try to understand why you have gone through what you have gone through.

Khalid Latif is Executive Director and Chaplain (Imam) for the Islamic Center at New York University (NYU). In 2005, Imam Latif was appointed the first Muslim chaplain at NYU. In 2006, Imam Latif was appointed the first Muslim chaplain at Princeton University. In 2007, Imam Latif's position was fully institutionalised at New York University, and so he committed himself to that institution and the building of a Muslim life institution. Imam Latif's dedication and ability to cross faith and cultural boundaries on a daily basis brought him recognition throughout the city, so much so that in 2007, Mayor Michael Bloomberg nominated Imam Latif to become the youngest chaplain in history of the New York City Police Department when he was 24 years old.

Article reprinted with permission from suhaibwebb.com

Historic moment as hijab-clad women bid for Euro seats

Headscarfed Muslim women in Slovenia and Greece provided a historic backdrop to May's European elections.

Faila Pasic Bistic and Greece's Anna Stamou became the first hijab-clad women to become candidates for election to the European Parliament.

Ms Bistic was nominated to become MEP for the Social Liberal Party. Ms Bistic, a women's rights activist, was the second head-scarfed Muslim women to seek election into the European Parliament after Greece's Anna Stamou.

Ms Stamou, a member of Greece's Eco Green Party, said she wanted to end discrimination against Muslims in her country as a reason for her candidacy.

Slovenia was allocated eight seats in the European Parliament and Greek candidates stood for 21 seats in the European

Stamou said she was born an Orthodox Christian but "found the answers to her questions" in Islam after delving for years into all religions.

Donning a hijab, she said her nomination for an EP seat was part in the fight against any discrimination of people by their appearance.

Stamou added that every citizen should do something for their country.

Muslims account for nearly 1.3 percent of Greece's 10.7 million population.

Neither woman was voted into the European Parliament, with Greek leftwing icon Manolis Glezos winning more votes (105,184) than any other Euro parliamentarian on Greece's 21-MEP ticket.



**The Management Committee and Staff at the
Islamic Women's Association of Queensland
(I.W.A.Q.)**

*would like to wish the Muslim community a prosperous
and successful month during Ramadan*

*May Allah reward you for your fasting, prayers,
charity, good intentions and deeds Aameen.*

Ramadan Kareem and Eid Mubarak!

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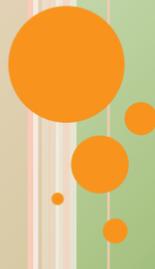
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Ramadan Mubarak

I wish all members of our Queensland Muslim community a very peaceful and blessed Holy month of Ramadan.

As Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, I have had the honour of visiting most of Queensland's Mosques. This has enabled me to appreciate the valuable contributions the Muslim community is delivering to Queensland, not least the economic, social and general community wellbeing.

Queensland is a truly diverse society both culturally and religiously and is home to people who speak more than 220 languages, come from more than 220 countries or geographical locations, and hold more than 100 religious beliefs, including Islam.

We are fortunate to live in a country that prides itself on freedom of religion as a crucial component of its democracy.

May peace be with you during the Holy month of Ramadan, a time for reflection on what is important to you and your family through your faith.

The Honourable Glen Elmes MP

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs
Minister Assisting the Premier



Tips to Control our Appetites this Ramadan

Naiyerah Kolkailah
suhaibwebb.com

IT'S TIME to break your fast. Isn't it a wonderful feeling? Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) says, "The fasting person experiences two joys: one when he breaks his fast, and one when he meets His Lord" (Muslim). That first joy is something we can all attest to. Especially with the long, 16 hour fast, it feels great to finally quench your thirst and get some satisfying food in your tummy. Ok, well, somemight not be the right word. For many of us, when sunset rolls around, we eat like there's no tomorrow. Or, should I say, to stock up for tomorrow? Whatever the reason – being tempted by delicious food, compensating for feeling deprived during the day, storing energy for the next day's fast, or just plain old social eating – we struggle repeatedly with over-eating at iftar time.

Subhan'Allah (Glory to God), the Prophet said: "The worst container to be filled to its utmost capacity is the stomach. It is enough for people to eat what will suffice to keep them standing, but if that is not attainable, then one third for food, one third for drink, and one third empty for air" (Tirmidhi). Most of us know the Prophet's Sunnah (practice), but how many of us continue to eat until we're 5/3rds full, to the point where we can't breathe and feel uncomfortably stuffed, lethargic, sleepy, and not as energized for prayer and worship as before we broke our fast? It's amazing how we can practice complete self-restraint with food while we're fasting, but we struggle to apply it even partially when we have the green light to eat.

We are now in the second half of Ramadan, and before we know it, the month will be over. Let's make it one of our goals (and insha'Allah [God-willingly] commit to it for good) to minimize over-eating so we can maximize the benefits of this blessed month. Here are seven tips to help develop a more mindful approach to eating:

- **Think of the Purpose.** One of the benefits of fasting is that it makes you appreciate the blessing of food. Allahsubhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He) says, "So eat of the sustenance which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good; and be grateful for the favor of Allah, if it is [indeed] Him that you worship" (Qur'an, 16:114). Your ultimate purpose in life is to worship Allah (swt), so food provides you the energy and strength you need to worship Him with more devotion, concentration, and reverence. As you have iftar every day, ask yourself: are my eating habits hindering me, or helping me increase the ihsan (excellence) in my worship?
- **Remember the Source.** If friends or relatives shower you with gifts, it is common courtesy to thank them and show appreciation. Allah (swt) provides you with sustenance on a daily basis, so remembering Him when you eat is a thoughtful way to express gratitude. The Prophet said, "Allah is pleased with His slave when he eats something and praises Him for it, or drinks something and praises Him for it" (Muslim). When you take the time to remember Allah, mindfully and with contemplation – before, during and after you eat – it is more likely that you will be satisfied with less food.
- **Start Small.** Break your fast with something light (i.e. dates and water), then pray Maghrib (evening prayer) before having the rest of your meal. That should take the edge off your hunger, which makes you less susceptible to binging and ravenous eating. Also, when you serve the food, serve it in a small plate, then go for seconds if you feel the need. Keep

the main dishes away from sight and not where you're sitting. The more food you see in front of you, the more you will eat without thinking about it first. If you're having trouble holding back, think of Allah's rewards, "And eat and drink but do not be wasteful, certainly He does not like those who are wasteful" (Qur'an, 7:31). Remember that waste is not just what goes in the trash, but also what we consume in excess.

- **Hydrate.** Don't forget to drink plenty of water when you break your fast. You'll be less likely to eat too much afterward because that hunger sensation (which is often mistaken for thirst) can partly subside with hydration. Also, sip the water slowly and smile with thanks as you feel it tingling down your body. The Prophet said, "Do not drink in one gulp like a camel, but in two or three (gulps). Mention the Name of Allah (say Bismillah) when you start drinking and praise Him (say Al-hamdu lillah) after you have finish (drinking)" (At-Tirmidhi).
- **Share with People.** Ramadan is a beautiful time because it brings family and friends together, and strengthens the bonds of kinship and brother/sisterhood. Part of that bond is built when you share food together. Sharing not only increases the blessing in your food, but also makes you realize how little you can be satisfied with. Some of the Companions came to the Prophet once and said, "We eat but are not satisfied." He said, "Perhaps you eat separately." The Companions affirmed that. He then said, "Eat together and mention the Name of Allah over your food. It will be blessed for you" (Abu Dawud). If you're at home, make sure you don't eat alone, and invite people to eat with you. If you're eating out in a group, partner up with someone and order a dish together. You will be surprised how filling it will be. The Prophet said, "Food for one person suffices for two, and food for two people suffices for four, and food of four people suffices for eight" (Muslim).
- **Go Super Slow.** Eating too much can sometimes be a result of eating too fast. It takes a mindful, conscious effort to actually slow down your body's motions while you're eating. Try to be aware of every piece of food you eat; raise it to your mouth slowly, chew it slowly, and swallow it slowly. That will give you time to enjoy the food, savor every bite, and be thankful for it. It will also give your body time to process the food you ingest, and give you time to listen to your body when it tells you it's satisfied.
- **Plan Ahead and Get Cracking!** One way to avoid over-eating is by shortening the meal time, and not making the evening revolve around food. Besides planning and making simple meals, every day before iftar, have a plan set that specifies how you will spend the rest of the night. Every moment is precious in Ramadan, so bring that to mind often, and plan accordingly. As soon as you feel satisfied with what you eat, consciously stop eating. Don't eat more just because there's food on your plate! It's better to save leftovers than stuffing yourself so food doesn't get thrown away. Then, after you finish eating, get moving; help clean the kitchen, go for a walk, read Qur'an. If you can, leave the area where food is visible so eating more isn't an option. And whatever you do, don't linger around the sweets and desserts for too long because that's just asking for trouble!

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Nadia

Meet the decision makers of tomorrow



Zuha

TWO STUDENTS of the Islamic College of Brisbane, Nadia Saeed and Zuha Ali, have been appointed as 2014 Youth Parliament Members. Nadia is representing Springwood and Zuha, Woodridge.

They are two of the 89 young Queenslanders aged between 12 and 25 who have been selected to represent their communities at this peak youth forum. Their respective departments are Education and the Arts as well as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs.

How did you get involved with youth parliament?

Nadia Saeed: I am a senior student in my 11th year at the Islamic College of Brisbane. In 2013, I was a member of the Lord Mayor's Youth Advisory Council in Brisbane and it was there that I heard about the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament and decided to sign up. I was lucky enough to have been chosen to represent the electorate of Springwood.

Zuha Ali: Prior to Nadia, a fellow student at the Islamic College of Brisbane presenting to me the wonderful opportunity to be a part of the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament (for which I am extremely grateful), I was unaware of the program. Nonetheless, the venture seemed exciting and the days I spent at the forum as Member for Woodridge were extremely productive. I was ecstatic upon receiving the phone call that informed me that my application had been accepted.

What does it mean to you to represent your communities?

Nadia Saeed: I am known by family and friends as a leader rather than a follower and I always strive to make a positive difference whether it's in school or the wider community. I am always willing to give anything a go and am an enthusiastic participant for school fundraisers or charity work. You can always count me in to help out because I love giving back to the community and feel happy knowing that I can make a difference. First and foremost, I believe the key to being an effective leader is to know how to have a good laugh – my teachers would most certainly agree.

Zuha Ali: Representing the Muslim community is a task I have aspired to from a very young age. When I saw the options for the committees that I could be a part of, I was immediately drawn to Aboriginal, Torres Strait

Islander and Multicultural Affairs. In youth affairs in particular, I believe that the potential of multiculturalism is often overlooked. It isn't that bigotry and prejudice are rife, because that certainly isn't the case, but that we have not come to appreciate enough unity in diversity, the beauty in difference. I wanted to voice our opinions, create opportunities for youth from non-English speaking backgrounds that were tailored to meet their needs and the requirements surrounding their religious and cultural values. If this can occur in this essential period of our lives, I believe that the gap between those from migrant backgrounds and the wider community, that is existent in some parts, can be closed permanently.

In September, the youth parliament members will be heading off to Queensland Parliament House to debate eight new youth bills which the Youth parliament members have been writing.

What are you looking forward to at the forum?

Nadia Saeed: As a member of the 2014 YMCA Youth Parliament, I am a part of the Education and Arts committee. In this committee, we discuss ideas to make our education here in Queensland as excellent as possible. I am so grateful to the founders of the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament as this organisation has introduced me to the world of politics and let me have my say in what I think. The YMCA QYP has given me a chance to really give back to my community of Springwood and stand up for what is right.

Zuha Ali: I now look forward to residential, the week in which we will debate our bill topics and put forth our ideas where I wish to present my vision. My school has certainly nurtured my interests. Our annual speech competition is an extremely competitive event that allows us to relay our visions to the rest of the school and primarily participating in this event has allowed me to develop the skills I need.

What are your future aspirations?

Nadia Saeed: I am not focusing on long-term career aspirations just yet but am determined to attain good grades in my final years of schooling to keep opportunities for the future open.

Zuha Ali: I hope I will be able to continue to do so as an adult, whether as a writer or public figure, Allah knows best. I can only pray that I am able to do justice to the opportunity that I have been presented with.

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The community needs more donations

WE ARE ALL entering the pre Ramadan period and making preparations for our Holy Month in which we actively concentrate on the important pillars of Islam and spiritually connect with the teachings of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

This is a time when we place special emphasis on charitable donations, which are usually collected during Ramadan.

The importance of Zakatul Fitr/Fitrah is to purify the one who fasts from any indecent act or speech and to help the poor and needy. The Fitrah has been set at \$10 by the Council of Imams.

Zakaat is charity, alms, kindness, official tax which is obligatory and must be given willingly. It is to purify wealth, by sharing with the poor and needy. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said "He is not a believer, he who eats his fill, whilst his neighbour besides him goes hungry." Sahih Bukari.112

Ramadan is also a time to acknowledge the work carried out by your own local charity, the Muslim Charitable Foundation, on your behalf since its formation in 2009. MCF have been transparent with all its dealings in distributing your donations to the needy in the local community. This fund has also ensured that Emergency Funds have reached the people on the ground in Disaster-hit countries and war-torn countries, with no administration costs. A visit to the website is all it takes to confirm this statement.

Visit www.mcfaustralia.org.au

The budget has not yet been passed, however, we all know that taxes will be rising to reduce the deficit, and the cost of living will rise. Also the number of unemployed has escalated over the last year and there are more retrenchments and job losses to come, from both the public and private sector. Welfare payments have also been difficult to access and many on welfare payments have been reassessed



and lost benefits. Rents have increased and the number of homeless people have rapidly risen. More than ever, we need our local charity to have sufficient funds to respond to the call for assistance to provide basic necessities for survival for those in need.

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MCF have signed an MOU with Muslim Aid who now have an office in the local community run by Riyaad Ally, a well known and well respected member of our local community. Muslim Aid personally distributes Emergency relief funds overseas. MCF will channel all overseas donations from their emergency account to Muslim Aid. You can specify the country you wish to donate to when you deposit your Zakaat into the bank and we will ensure it reaches that destination.

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Concentration on prayer and rituals of Ramadan bring the community closer together. It is a period of trust and spirituality and caring for each other. May this Ramadan bring happiness and comfort to those who participate in this Sacred Month of Fasting and Cleansing. Peace be with you.

The Muslim DNA

Weekend course with Al-Kauthar

Raeesa Khatree

TWO qualities, rudeness and harsh-heartedness, which, had our Prophet possessed, he would not have been able to change the world the way he did. Instead, he possessed an enormous amount of compassion with which he was able to deal with the challenges around him. As Muslims, we strive to live in his example; we strive to do the things he did.

From young we are taught the ritual prayers and du'as, we memorise what we are taught and apply them daily. How often do we look deeper than the rituals and focus on the meanings and significance of what we pray, and how often do we learn or teach the human qualities possessed by our Prophet?

This is what the Al Kauthar course, The Muslim DNA, aimed to teach. And based on the reviews of the 150 people who attended the course in Brisbane last weekend of 23rd and 24th of May, that is what it did!

Sheikh Yahya Ibrahim led the attendees on a journey of discovery of the character of our beloved Prophet Muhammad SAW, and how we could apply those characteristics in our daily lives.

Beginning with the individual, he spoke about the compassion of the Prophet SAW, a quality placed in him, with great purpose, by Allah. He spoke about the importance of being open-minded, as well as the importance of seeking knowledge, being optimistic and engaging in self-control.

Drawing on lessons from the life of Ibrahim AS, the life of Muhammad SAW and the lives of his companions, he covered issues such as attaining Taqwa, resisting Shaytan and the importance and methods of Dhikr, remembrance of Allah.

The following sections dealt with the family; the importance of parents and the high status

that Islam gives our mothers. He gave practical advice on how to deal with spouses, children and extended family and he spoke about roles in the community, and how success in communities largely relies on individual characteristics such as honesty, integrity, contentment, generosity and many more.

In most circumstances, two full days of lectures would be rather tiresome, however, for most people who attended, the time did not drag on, and their attention span seldom waned. Sheikh Yahya kept his audience engaged and interested and the content of the lecture was so stimulating that many questions remained unanswered by the end of the two days. He has promised to answer the questions and upload the answers with the audio of the lecture, which will be available online soon, to all who attended.

"Ramadan is the month whose beginning is mercy, whose middle is forgiveness and whose end is freedom from fire."
[Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)]

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Ask the Dietitian

Fathima Abdoola

Assalamualaikum readers, it's Ramadan again! I hope that the meal plan I provided last year was a success for some. Ramadan is all about self-control, particularly after we open our fasts. Last year I talked about all the wonderful benefits of fasting. Below is a list of fasting tips and answers to common questions.

- **Hydrate** – ensure you get enough fluids in when you eat and drink, your first priority should be water rather than high sugar drinks. You can also have beverages such as juice, milk, coffee and tea. Soups, stews and high moisture foods, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, watermelon and oranges all contribute to hydrating you too.



- **Choose the right foods** – foods eaten should be nutrient dense rather than energy dense, meaning high in vitamins and minerals, rather than just energy from added fats and sugars. Your meals should consist of lean protein, unprocessed carbohydrates, low-fat dairy, healthy plates and plenty of fruit and vegetables.

- **Protein and Fibre at Suhur** – If you remember protein is what makes you feel full after a meal and fibre reduces the GI (how fast your energy is released) of a food. Ensuring you have these at Suhur you can delay hunger pangs. Examples of protein foods include eggs, cheese, peanut butter, beans, and meats. Oats, whole wheat bread, apples, and pears are high in fiber. Besides keeping you full, fiber helps you go, which is important for your digestive system health.

- **Skip dessert** – Desserts are often fried and syrup-drenched and as such skipping this meal most days of the week will only do you good. Try a bowl of fruits with low-fat yoghurt instead and choose a small serving of dessert to satisfy your cravings once a week.



Fathima Abdoola
fathima.abdoola@gmail.com

- **Social gatherings** – for some every Iftar is eaten out, for others only on weekends. The key is to be picky and avoid overeating, which usually happens when a wide variety of food is before you. Ask yourself: What do I really want to eat? What is different or special on the menu tonight? How much am I having? If the food doesn't give you pleasure and you can easily have it any other day, then pass.

- **Multivitamin** – if you are concerned you are unable to get enough in each day, a multivitamin won't hurt. This will ensure you do not miss out on any important nutrients. This can always be avoided if you choose a variety of foods throughout the month.

- **Exercise** – I am often asked whether you are able to exercise in Ramadan or not. Of course you can! If you have the time for it after Taraweeh (which is exercise in itself) then this is the best time to do so. I would advise against engaging in high intensity exercise during the day as it can increase your risk of dehydration. Another idea is to go for your daily walk/jog just before Iftaar so you don't have to wait long to eat and drink after this.

- **Salt intake** – A high intake of salt (sodium) is more likely to trigger thirst. Sodium is vital for fluid balance in our body since water goes where sodium goes. The kidneys usually excrete a high intake of sodium so water is also lost. A high salt intake will also affect people with high blood pressure problems.



- **Reducing caffeine intake** – Caffeine is a diuretic, which means it makes you urinate more, thus increasing fluid loss from your body and promoting dehydration. Fluid lost also contains important minerals such as calcium. Therefore, the more fluid is lost due to caffeine consumption, the more the absorption of important minerals is affected. Caffeine is also a stimulant drug, where large amounts can make people anxious or cause headaches.

Expanding Comfort Zones and Setting Goals

Fatima Panju



IT WAS March 2012 and my alarm clock sounded another whatever weekday.

I had reached a point in my life where I was fed up to my teeth with the daily routine of life. I felt like a caged animal.

Sure, I liked the reliability of being clothed, fed, safe and loved, however I was beginning to feel depressed within the safety and comfort of my life.

The familiar routine of my comfort zone kept me from learning, and experiencing new things that were potentially good for my personal growth.

It was easy for me to get trapped into doing the same thing every day. The comfort of my routine kept me safe, it kept me from taking risks and living my life in an extraordinary way. My monotonous and repetitive, life was one without any new experiences, knowledge or interests. Fear of social judgment discouraged me from trying anything with a risk of rejection or failure.

I was noticing that my comfortable life was fostering an attitude of learned helplessness and making progress harder. Learning, creating, growing could only happen once I took that step outside my fortress to venture into the wilderness.

I felt queasy and uneasy with the sensations of positive growth, however I knew all these feelings were a signal that I was on the right track. I realised then that if life was always easy, I was not challenging myself enough to grow and get rewards. The truth is that within each of us is everything we need, all the resources, the possibilities, the love the courage and belief to live an amazing life.

Ask yourself the following questions and notice where they lead.

- What will your life be like in 10 years if you stay within your comfort zone? What if you instead continually expand its boundaries?
- Examine your life goals. Will they require you to go outside your comfort zone? Or have you limited your goal setting to things that you can do comfortably and safely?
- Today, do something outside your comfort zone. Go for a run, tell a joke to a stranger, sing at the top of your voice.

As your life continues to improve it will become easier to step outside your comfort zone. When

you're happy, optimistic and confident, you'll be more inclined to take risks and live adventurously.

As a personal development coach, I work with a lot of people on goal-setting. The power of setting goals is an extremely valuable skill to have as it allows us to plan for positive growth and change. Setting goals puts you in the driver's seat, giving you the power to transform your life in any way you choose.

Most people have not been taught to set goals, and with that in mind, I am going to offer some basic goal setting techniques.

A goal without a plan is just a dream or a wish. You just need a SMART goal. Whether it's losing weight, kicking bad habits or exercising more, these things are possible with a little planning and dedication.

Be SMART about your goals.

Make sure your goals fit in with this model. Your goals need to be **specific** – that is, state exactly what you want to achieve. Nothing fluffy, just crystal clear,

They need to be **measurable** – how will you know you've achieved your goal? What will be your evidence?

Your goals need to be **attainable** – achievable by you and something you alone can influence, despite of your family and work commitments.

They need to be **realistic** – within reach yet still a stretch, with an incremental plan for getting there.

Your goals need to have a **timeframe** – when will you achieve this goal by and how will you celebrate? Last but not least we need to remember to take action.

If you don't already set goals, do so, starting now. As you make this technique part of your life, you'll find your career accelerating, and you'll wonder how you did without it!

Fatima Panju is a life coach with Chrysalis Coaching. Check out chrysaliscoaching.net.au



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Kais Al Kaissi

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The design process is always about finding a unique angle with which to portray a business, and that is why I've brought *a fish in sea* all the way from the Middle East to find a new home here in the coral reefs of Australia.

Having completed my Masters degree in Graphic Branding and worked at *a fish in sea* London during that period, I then returned home to Beirut to establish our office in the Middle East.

Four years later, I have embarked on another journey to see the world from a completely different angle.

The aim is simple, to offer professional and honest design and branding to a community ripe with potential.

At *a fish in sea*, we offer design efficiency. We design in a multitude of languages, for the Australian Muslim and wider community and the exacting blend of Arabic and English design is now on offer.

Impressions do matter. Create a good one and it will urge your customers to take action.

Everything your company produces should be carefully branded into a coherent and succinct message to ensure your business is portrayed as professional. Your advertising, business cards, website and marketing materials are all avenues that assert your business as a noteworthy organisation and so increase your chance of selling.

If applied correctly, appropriate graphic design can ensure you get the competitive edge over your rivals.

And that's exactly what we are here for. Offering a local touch, backed by expertise gained on the international stage, *a fish in sea* have the know-how to ensure your business has a solid foundation through designing a successful identity.

Whether branding a start-up company or rebranding a well-established one, we get personal. We take the time to learn your business, understand your product or service, and develop the same loyalty and enthusiasm you have for it; we join your team and your success becomes a testament of ours.

It is our duty to make sure our community is better equipped to shine through this country and the entire world, and I am here to help take the Muslim and wider businesses sector to the next level. Giving your business a professional graphic image will go a long way in capturing the right kind of attention and portraying an appropriate message. It is all about your image, and by developing a considered brand we can portray it in the right light.

Our objective is to make sure your business stands out not only in our community, but also across all communities nationwide.

Our services aim to give your product or service a professional image and create a brand that commands your market.

We believe that your corporate communications attract those that they resonate with. Hire the right people, so you know your business is in safe hands. For consultancy on graphic design, branding and marketing communications, contact *a fish in sea*, the international design agency that offers you a local service. That's business design efficiency.

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The way forward for 'Islamic' Schooling

Dylan Chown[1], Mohamad Abdalla[2] and Gregor Shepherd[3]

A three-month desk study analysing the strengths and weaknesses of secular and Islamic educational systems in 12 Muslim countries found that the quality of education in all of these countries has declined (Huitt, 2004). Interestingly while the quality of education in public schools in these countries is poor, it is comparatively better than that of most Islamic schools, even those that follow the public school curriculum (Benoliel, 2003).

There are a number of factors for this decline, including: a shortage of qualified teachers, limited and ineffective teacher training, outdated curricula, inadequate supply and poor quality of learning materials and textbooks, and weak institutional capacity at the central and local levels (Benoliel, 2003). Additionally, religious teachers in Islamic schools have only religious training and are therefore usually less qualified academically to teach than other trained non-religious teachers (Benoliel, 2003).

Modern research demonstrates that these problems are also found in Islamic schools and madrassah in Western countries such as Australia.

Islamic schools in Australia and throughout the West were established as means of gaining both an education that would allow Muslim children to excel in the market place as well as provide that foundation of Islamic knowledge that Madrassahs typically provided in other contexts. In other words, if a child went to an Islamic school there should be no need to attend Madrassah after school. Parents valued the preservation of cultural mores and practices; learning of the Arabic language; a sheltered environment to foster strong Muslim identity formation; modest dress; separation of genders; provision for prayer; acknowledgement of Islamic celebrations; and a so called 'Islamic environment'.

Thirty years on in Australia and more overseas, the education landscape has shifted somewhat. Have Islamic schools responded to these shifts? Have we as a community really started thinking about what we want from an Islamic education? Is an Islamic environment sufficient? Does a sheltered environment really foster a strong Muslim identity? Does it prepare young Muslims for the outside world? With such a relentless and overbearing focus on academic results driven by Islamic schools in response to high parental expectations, what about Islamic practice? **What about spirituality?**

It would seem that what we say we want and what we value are two different things; a situation which Muslim students in Islamic schools have astutely picked up on. Little do we know about the impact that this has had on the young people in our community leaving Islamic schools and entering the larger world. The anecdotal evidence suggests that they felt ill-equipped for the world they entered.

With the expansion of the Islamic civilisation, and the contact with different socio/economic/political/cultural circumstances there was a need to organise, renew, and adjust the 'Islamic' in teaching.

However, a consistent feature of the colonial discourse on Islamic countries was the theme of disorder, including in the realm of education. Based on this apparent chaos, Orientalists asserted that there was no structure to classical madrassah education, no exams, no curriculum, and no institutional coherence.

Professor George Makdisi refuted that view demonstrating that classical Islamic education had developed sophisticated institutions of learning, that were structured, and by their own intelligible logic.

The madrassah began to spread throughout the Islamic world in the late eleventh century, which became the model for European universities.

X Legal Education in Mamluk Egypt (1250-1517), shows that teaching at classical Madrassahs attracted the highest-paid academic positions (madrassah administrators earned even more), and while madrassahs always taught Islamic law, other subjects were taught.

Moore even demonstrates that madrassah developed to appoint a *mu id*, a kind of mentor or teaching assistant, who had the task of monitoring the progress of students.

Classical madrassahs basic guidance for a curriculum began with the study of introductory compendia, which enabled the student to read more extensive works **independently**.

The importance of well trained teachers was well recognized even as far back as the Mamluk-era (13th to 15th centuries). During that era students were advised about **what characteristics to look for in a good teacher**, not which madrassahs have the best reputation, the highest stipends, the best teacher-student ratio, or the best library.

Teaching the 'Islamic' was therefore purposeful, organised, focused on critical thinking and the teacher was central to its success.

This changed over the last 2 centuries due to a host of factors including the onslaught of Colonisation, and so teaching Islam at madrassahs was no longer for the purpose of 'transformation' of individuals but 'preservation' of 'Islamic' identity even if it led to a dysfunctional person.

The same factors are relevant to Islamic schools in the West. What we choose to assess both at the classroom and institution level reflects what we are prioritising. As long as Muslim children are excelling academically and they are educated within an Islamic environment, which needs further consideration in itself, we reason that it is better than any other alternative. This positions Islamic education at 'transmission' and 'preservation', far from the goal of 'transformation'.

What are the goals of Islamic education? There are a range of views in the Muslim community as to what the purpose of Islamic education is. One could argue that it is to provide an Islamic environment? It may be to develop academic skills. Islamic education may be to change certain behaviours and create pious Muslims. What we lack is clarity with regards to the vision and aims of an Islamic school. We lack Islamic schools that are willing to post an Islamic vision and then evaluate their performance up against this vision

(Memon, 2013). This would immediately address this disconnect between what we say we want and what we value.

An overriding recommendation of the First World Conference on Muslim Education held at Makkah (Al- Attas, 1979, 1980) was the need to reclaim an authentic vision for Islamic education, particularly as Islamic schools have appeared in the West. Decades later, little progress has been reported toward this recommendation (Nasr, 2012; Saqeb, 2000). An authentic vision would require a school vision inclusive of an Islamic worldview. This worldview is the critical component to meaningfully and genuinely embedding Islamic perspectives throughout the curriculum. It addresses the dichotomy between what is Islamic and what is secular. It is also required to create teaching and pedagogy frameworks (Abdullah, 2013) grounded in the Islamic tradition as well as best educational practice, allowing all staff in an Islamic school to contribute to vision enactment. An Islamic worldview provides Muslim students with a lens to see and understand the world. It equips them with the tools to negotiate the world in which they live and the moral compass to engage in positive social impact.

Islamic school graduates now at university, reflecting back on their experience in an Islamic school refer to very clinical teaching and learning geared toward securing academic results. This focus has served to reposition how we value knowledge, shifting away from the meaning and purpose of knowledge as is understood in Islam. Considering what we need, Islamic education needs to be practical and meaningful for students. Students become disinterested when they cannot understand how their lessons will make any difference to their life. Islamic education has to be practical so that students can transform their lives. It also has to be meaningful so that they can see the importance and value. Islam is a holistic deen and has practical solutions to every challenge that life throws at Muslims. If students feel that Islam cannot solve a problem they will automatically turn to other ways and methods to solve their problems. Islamic education must be presented to students in a way that students appreciate how Islam provides solutions and guidance for any challenge. This will be achieved when the education program is relevant to their daily lives; and when it is recognisable to them for their context.

Islamic education programs need to make sense to students in the Australian context.

As an example, **Australian Muslim students** need to understand how to deal with non-Muslims, because they live in a majority non-Muslim environment. They need to understand how to present their faith to non-Muslims in a respectful and authentic way without compromising their own faith tradition and practice. Therefore their studies need to support building their Australian Muslim identity without creating social divisions.

Islamic studies also need to be relevant and age appropriate. Islamic educational materials need to be reviewed in the light of educational research so that it is enhanced in ways that empower students with relevant and age appropriate knowledge. For example sections of Islamic history from the sirah, biography of the Prophet, (AS) need to be reconsidered. It is not age appropriate for 8 year old children to examine in summary form the interactions in Medina between the Prophet and 'the Jews.' There are a number of points that need to be reassessed in this example.

1. No context is provided for students as to who 'the Jews' are. How can students fully appreciate the events when they don't know anything about Jewish people, faith or culture?
2. Is this topic practical for 8 year olds? Would it not be more beneficial for students to examine the sirah for moments where the Prophet and Companions struggled to maintain their faith in a hostile environment? Struggles that are similar to the struggles Muslim children also face daily. 3) There has been no consideration of whether this topic is age appropriate. The history of the biography in this case is more appropriate for international relations and politics, topics that would arise in subjects at a senior or university level. Why are we presenting this topic in such a way for 8 year olds? Is it to suggest that 'the Jews' are merely traitors and untrustworthy? Would it not be better for 8 year olds to examine the biography for examples of how to deal with Jews, or other non-Muslims, so that they understand how to live in harmony with their neighbours, school mates, teachers and the wider Australian community?

Islamic studies materials must be re-examined by experts to determine the appropriate sequencing of information and topics so that students can get the most out of their studies. This task requires the reorganising of information, not the abandoning of information. Appropriate, relevant and in context, all of this will empower students and provide them with the knowledge that Islam has the solutions to daily challenges and problems. It will also enhance the Australian Muslim identity for children living in this country and increase their sense of belonging.

It is time for Muslims in Australia to consider deeply what Islamic education is. We should no longer allow ourselves to be blinded by the obviousness of what we think Islamic education is. Rather it is high time to actively reconsider and ponder what it is that we think Islamic education should be; how it should be presented and most importantly what are the goals of Islamic education institutions. An authentic Islamic vision and the willingness to evaluate success based on this vision is key. **Once this task is complete Muslim students in Australia will receive authentic Islamic education that they can use to solve daily challenges in their lives. What can be more empowering than that?**

1. Dylan Chown has extensive experience in teaching/ education and is currently in the final stage of completing a Master in Education with a focus on Islamic schools. He is the Principal of the Kuraby madrassah.
2. Associate Professor Mohamad Abdalla is the Founding Director of the National Centre of Excellence in Islamic Studies at Griffith University.
3. Gregor Shepherd has extensive experience in teaching/education and is currently completing his PhD in Education.



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Basbousa with Almond

Basbousa is a semolina cake popular in the Middle East as well as the countries along the Eastern Mediterranean shores.

The cake itself is not too sweet but it is soaked with a sugar syrup scented with rose water.

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 35 minutes

Ingredients

- ½ cup butter or 100 g, melted
- 1 tin fat free sweetened condensed milk
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- 2 cups semolina or 320 g
- 1 cup ground almonds or 100 g
- 1 cup water or 250 ml

For the syrup

- ½ cup sugar or 100 g
- 1 cup water or 250 ml
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch, (to thicken the syrup)
- ½ cup water, (cold, to mix with cornstarch)
- 1 tablespoon ground almonds
- 1 tablespoon rose water

Preparation

Combine butter, fat free sweetened condensed milk and baking powder and stir well. Add semolina, ground almond and water and stir until well combined. Pour and level mixture into 28cm x 24cm baking tin. Bake in a 190°C preheated oven for 35 minutes or until top is golden. Remove from

oven and allow cooling to room temperature. Cut into diamond shapes and pour all over the cooled syrup. Place in fridge to cool completely and then serve. To prepare the syrup: Add sugar and 1 cup of water to a saucepan. Bring to boil and simmer for 6-8 minutes. Dissolve the 1 tablespoon of cornstarch in the remaining ½ cup of cold water and add to the simmering sugar and water, stir constantly on heat for 2 min until syrup thickens. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice, rosewater and ground almond. <Basbousa-10-Somali-Food-Blog.jpg>

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Chicken Garlic Bites

Prep time: 30 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite size pieces
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Directions:

- Place chicken in shallow dish.
- In small bowl, mix olive oil, garlic, and black pepper.
- Pour over chicken.
- Cover and marinate 30 minutes.
- Drain.
- Preheat oven to 240 degrees
- Mix bread crumbs and cayenne.
- Coat chicken.
- Arrange in a single layer on cookie sheet.
- Bake 10 minutes or until brown.



Rooh Afza Rose Milk Drink

2007 was the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rooh Afza! The Mashroob e Mashriq ("syrup of the East") was first introduced by its inventor and founder of Hamdard Laboratories, Hakeem Abdul Majeed, in 1907 (in the then undivided India). Rooh Afzah is a blend of pure crystalline sugar, distilled extracts of citrus flowers, aquas of fruits, vegetables and cooling herbal ingredients (www.hamdard.in)

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Blending Time: 30 seconds

Refrigerate: half-1 hour

Serves: 2 glass

Ingredients:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------|
| Rooh Afza | 3 tbsp |
| Almonds | 7 |
| Basil Seeds (sabza) | 2 tsp |
| Milk (cold) | 200 ml |
| Sugar | 3 tbsp |
| Water | 150 ml |

Preparation:

1. Soak the basil seeds (sabza) in to water for 10 minutes.
2. Grate or chop the almonds roughly.
3. Blend the sugar, Rooh Afza with milk or mix with the help of spoon.
4. Pour in to glasses and divide the basil seeds equally in two glass, garnish with almonds.



Eggplant Musakaa

MOUSSAKA is an eggplant and/or potato-based dish popular in Balkan and Mediterranean cuisines, with many local and regional variations. The same name and recipe is found throughout the lands that were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. In Greece, the dish is layered and typically enjoyed hot. In Turkey, it is sautéed and served in the style of a casserole, and is consumed warm or at room temperature. In Arabic countries, a variant of the same recipe is eaten cold.

Preparation time: 25 minutes

Cooking time: 35 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 medium eggplants or 750 g, cut into large cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion or 125 g, sliced
- 5 cloves garlic, sliced
- 2 medium tomatoes or 300 g, peeled and sliced
- 2 cubes vegetable stock
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 3 cups water or 750 ml
- 1 tin canned chickpeas or 240 g, drained
- Pinch of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon dried mint

Preparation

Grill eggplant cubes in a large non-stick pan from all sides and set them aside

Warm olive oil in a medium saucepan and sauté onion for 3 minutes or until onion is tender. Add garlic and stir until fragrant then add the tomato and stir for 5 minutes or until tomato is tender.

Add vegetable stock cubes, tomato paste, water, and the prepared eggplant. Bring to boil then simmer over a low heat for 15 minutes or until eggplant is almost cooked

Add chickpeas, cinnamon powder and dried mint and simmer for 10 minutes or until eggplant is completely cooked.

AA DENTAL

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B.D.S. (Adelaide)

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www.nodcay.net

Dr. M. H. D. Khatree

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Areeba Alam

OP-3



Fatima Moussa

OP-3



Oumama H.Mohammed

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To all Year 12 students at Islamic College of Brisbane
for achieving excellent results

OP-6: Aiman Badrulhisham, Sibgha Jillani

OP-7: Azizullah Cais Nassiry, Rose Richani

OP-8: Esra Kartal, Iman Mesbah, Amna Rehan Qureshi

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The Algester Mosque fund raising is moving ahead

ON FRIDAY 16 May an approved collection from the Mosque Committee, supervised by Hj. Mohammed Nasib, took place at the Western District Islamic Centre (Mt. Druitt, Rooty Hill Mosque).

The Algester Fun Raising committee, comprising the coordinator, Hj Abdul Rahman Deen, Imam Mohammed Aslam, Dado Sacur, Yahya Hashim, Aseef and Mehmood Osman, were armed with 6 EFTPOS machines and a thousand pledge forms when they flew out of Brisbane. They were met there by the Rooty Mosque committee, the principal of the 1200-student school attached to the Mosque, Dr Imam Ali, and ex-Brisbanite, Imam Tariq. Moulana Aslam led the Juma programme that afternoon after which the collection drive commenced in earnest raising \$8,500 which was then topped up to \$10,000 with a generous donation from the local committee.

Since the very successful fundraising dinner held recently in Brisbane, the initial target of \$1,950,000 looks very achievable and with the collections and pledges to date the total now stands at \$1,650,000 leaving a shortfall of \$300,000.

The pledges of \$150,000 are still outstanding and are required to be settled urgently to give the committee any chance of competing this phase of the project in time for Ramadan. Those who have made pledges and others with cash donations are encouraged to deposit the monies directly to the bank account of the Fund.

Further fund raising drives are planned for the near future.

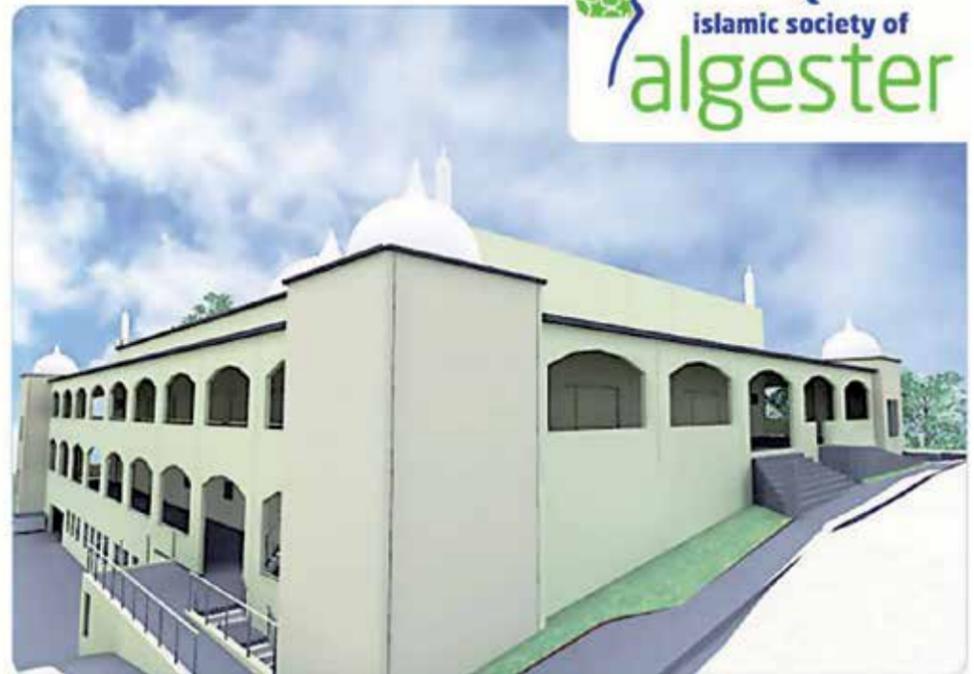
Algester Mosque Appeal

The Messenger of Allah (sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam) said: "Whoever builds a Masjid for the sake of Allah, Allah will build something similar for him in Paradise." [Sahih Muslim] Contact Details are below:

E: info@isoa.com.au
W: www.isoa.com.au
P: Islamic Trust of Algester, PO Box 17, Sunnybank Qld 4109
Bank Details for Direct Deposits / Transfers:
Bank: Commonwealth Bank of Australia
A/C Name: Islamic Trust of Algester
BSB: 064 001 Account Number: 1049 4681 Branch: Adelaide Street, Brisbane

Postal Address:
Islamic Trust of Algester,
PO Box 17, Sunnybank Q 4109

For more information please contact the below:
1. Treasurer – Hajji Yusuf Hussein
Phone: 0409 746 786
2. Secretary – Hajji Mahmood Osman
Phone: 07 3344 7477, Fax: 07 3344 7511
3. President – Masood Ayoob
Phone: 0438 750 786
4. Coordinator – Hajji Abdul Rahman (Ray) Deen – Phone: 07 3879 9492



SISTERS' HOUSE Update

From the desk of Sisters' House

THE NEW Sisters' House is a bright and spacious 4 bedroom house in Runcorn with many communal living areas allowing for multiple activities and classes. It has a small Islamic Library where sisters are free to come and browse at their leisure. There is a sisters learning circle (halaqa) 11am-1pm every Saturday that offers tafseer and seerah classes. We have our very popular new Muslim support group that meets regularly. We have also established the Beauty of a Muslimah Youth Group for girls aged 12-16 years that meets every Saturday night at the house for halal fun and activities. Other activities include weekly craft classes, an Islam 101 course for new Muslims, Arabic and tajweed classes.

Sisters' House Myths BUSTED

We get asked all kinds of questions about the Sisters' House and here are some of the most common ones:

Q. Do you own the Sisters' House?

A. No, we pay rent through a real estate agent like anyone else that leases a property.

Q. So do you get government funding?

A. No, that's easier said than done! We are yet to find a grant category that we fit into. The closest category we may qualify for would be housing and homelessness, but as yet we have been unable to secure any government funding.

Q. How do you get money then?

A. By regular and one off donations from community members and fundraising events like our upcoming Annual Fundraising Dinner on May 31st. We do request that tenants pay rent if they are able to as there are obvious ongoing costs like rent, electricity, water and internet that amount to approximately \$600 per week.

Regular donations in the first 3 months of 2014 are as follows: \$130 in January, \$320 in February plus \$150 for moving costs and \$390 so far this month. May Allah reward these donors for their kind contribution. As you can see we do not regularly receive thousands of dollars but al hamdu lillah the Sisters House has managed to continue for nearly 4 years. That is why our fundraising events are vital in topping up our funds for the continued provision of community services.

Q. I've heard that the Sisters' House encourages women to get divorced. The house is full of divorced and single women that just want to have fun and encourage each other to not get married. Isn't that sending the wrong message to any young girls or women that go there?

Wrong! Each tenant has different circumstances that brought them to the house, and each sister strives to overcome her own set of issues and challenges to

achieve positive life goals. We have witnessed time and again the support that the tenants give to each other, empathising and understanding through shared experiences and conversations. This does not equate to encouraging divorce or not getting married. Al hamdu lillah many sisters have benefitted from their time at the house and have gone on to marry or re-marry.

We have a strict policy about tenants' right to privacy. It is part of the house rules that no one's information is shared with the public and gossiping or backbiting within the house is not permitted. Sisters and children that visit the house sometimes interact with tenants, but intimate details of their personal situations are not discussed.

We have a number of fully qualified counsellors who volunteer their time to speak with anyone who requires it and that's not limited to tenants. Any sister that requires confidential counselling services can contact the Sisters' House to receive a referral.

Q. I've heard that the Sisters' House is Wahhabi, Salafi, make a profit from donations etc etc

A. We've heard all sorts of things that people think and say about the Sisters' House over the years. Isn't it funny that half truths and wrong information can be easily assumed by people that have never taken the time to visit the house themselves or talk to anyone involved in running it to find out the facts?

If you have any questions about Sisters' House please visit our website and leave a message, give us a call on 0431 747 356 or 0449 268 375 or pop in for a cuppa if you are a sister. We have a Sisters' House group on Facebook that sisters are free to join. Please note that it is a closed group so you will need to send us a request.

Q. Doesn't the Sisters House only help white Aussie reverts?

A. On the contrary, Muslim women from a wide range of ages and cultures have received our services and stayed at the house; young, old, married, divorced, single, students, unemployed, workers and born Muslims aged 8 months to nearly 80 years.

Of course we love to help new Muslims or ladies interested in Islam, but that is not limited to one race of people. We have assisted reverts from such diverse backgrounds including Japan, Denmark, the Phillipines, India, Australia, Germany, Belarus, Colombia, New Zealand, Ireland, Serbia, Greece, China and others.

Q. So can you help everyone in our community that needs a place to stay? Can you provide aged care, refugee accommodation or housing for sisters who are experiencing domestic violence?

A. Regrettably we are unable to help everyone that is referred to us and our resources, facilities and time are limited. We are a committee of volunteers that have our families, businesses and other commitments and we each do the best that we can to keep the Sisters' House going. As anyone who runs a volunteer organisation knows, it's very hard work that takes dedication and we greatly treasure our volunteers! We have begun a volunteer register of sisters that can help other sisters in many ways in the community. If you would like to help please visit www.sistershouse.org and click on the tab that says Volunteer/Donate.

The past 6 months have seen a significant increase in the amount of people requiring assistance in many forms. There is a great demand for emergency accommodation, with the Sisters' House receiving calls on an almost daily basis from Islamic and other community and government organisations seeking housing solutions for their Muslim clients. Whilst we would love to help everyone, it is just not practical or safe to do so.

Often we are the last resort for some sisters in terrible situations that are referred to us, but due to safety

reasons we are unable to offer them accommodation and have to refer them on to the police or domestic violence help services. It is heartbreaking to hear of these types of cases time and time again, only to say 'Sorry, we can't help.' It has always been the Sisters' House policy to provide crisis accommodation to sisters from low risk situations, therefore we do not classify ourselves as a safe house as many people mistakenly assume.

There have been previous attempts to establish a safe house for Brisbane Muslimahs, but they have not yet succeeded. Just because domestic violence is not talked about openly doesn't mean it's not happening in our community. If there is anyone in our community that is able to help with solutions to this serious issue by gathering the necessary resources and qualified people to establish a safe house for Muslim women and children in our community, please do so because it is greatly needed.

In conclusion, may Allah bless each and every one of you that has helped the Sisters' House over the past 4 years. We are grateful that we can make a difference to women and children in our community, but there is still quite a way to go.

Dr Naeem Khan

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THE FAMILY DAY CARE PROBLEM

Family Day Care (FDC) is designed to be an alternative type of child care for people who would like their children to be cared for in a home environment rather than a Day Care Centre. It can be a nice entry into child care. My children went to FDC in Northern NSW when they were small.

Normally an FDC Educator would care for children from babies to school-age in their homes during the day. They may also have older children before and/or after school. Parents would bring them in the morning and the Educator would take them to school and/or the Educator would collect them from school and their parents would collect them later from the FDC home.

There are some Educators who provide child care at unusual hours or for 24 hours per day. There are many FDC Educators in our community who are providing us with a wonderful service and who are also meeting all regulations and requirements.

There is also FDC in our community that is very different. A little over 2 years ago, I began to hear about a government program where people were paid thousands of dollars a week to take children to and from school. This didn't sound right – I had never heard of such a scheme. I was told it is Family Day Care.

Soon afterwards I began to hear of people who are registered as FDC Educators and who would 'swap' their children with each other, ie. they would say that they were looking after each other's children in order to collect payment from the federal government in the form of Child Care Benefit (CCB).

Many children in our community are being used to take money from the government for child care that does not exist. Many parents in our community are actively involved in collecting money from the government for child care that does not exist.

Many people are driving children – sometimes close relatives - to and from school and claiming to be providing an official, documented Educational Program in Before and After School Care and claiming up to 50 hours of CCB money from the government per week. Some simply take their own kids to school and still claim for other children.

There are FDC coordination units or offices, which actively encourage these practices. They recruit new Educators by telling them how much money they can make for doing so little. The owners of these offices make money from the actions of the Educators. They take an amount per hour of CCB/child care claimed to have been provided by the Educators.

I have heard that some people who are using FDC for their children have made deals with carers to claim a 'cut' for themselves out of the CCB money. There are some people who have their children's CCB allowance all tied up in child care that does not exist which means that the children can't attend real Education and Care Services at all.

Some of these things are obviously haram and illegal. Some things that are occurring may be in a more grey area between obviously right and obviously wrong. We have been warned as Muslims to stay away from these things:

'Whoever falls into doubtful things will fall into what is unlawful.'

Early Childhood Education and Care is a highly regulated industry and is designed to provide high quality education and care which must be documented and reported to the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care.

- A 15 minute car ride from home to school and/or school to home cannot be classified as high quality education and care session with provision of an Educational Program.
- A 15 minute car ride that is billed to the federal government in the form of CCB as a 3 hour educational program is essentially a false claim.
- A 15 minute car ride twice a day that is billed to the government as 10 hours daily and 50 hours per week of an Education and Care program is fraud.

Last year, in Victoria, there were at least two investigations into FDC Services in which fraudulent CCB claims were targeted and in which FDC Services repaid hundreds of thousands of dollars to the government. A newspaper article reported that "it appears the breaches are occurring in small ethnic communities."

We should be reminded that the entire mission of the Last Messenger of Allaah was to warn us about the road that leads to Hell and show us the path that leads to Paradise. By Allaah's Will, his teachings remain with us in order to guide us away from the terror and pain that is Hell and to guide us towards Paradise.

He informs us:

"The Fire has been surrounded by lusts and desires and the Paradise by hardships." [Bukhari, Muslim].

My intention in writing this is to remind all of us that Islam is in *everything* we do and there is no better time than Ramadan to make necessary changes to our lives in order to become closer to our Creator.

If we are willing to make false statements and declarations in order to gain money we are not entitled to, what does this say about our Imaan?

Do we not believe that our Creator will provide for us by legal and halal means?

If we draw others into doing the same things, will we be found responsible for these actions and bear more sin for it?

For those who know what they are doing is wrong, it is obligatory to stop.

Those who may be ignorant of the reality of the situation should consider that, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is, and look much more closely at what they intend to do.

By Khadijah Hurst.

Gratitude at a deeper level My journey to Islam

AMT interviewed Ayesha Lea Lewis from Queensland about her first Ramadan experience.

Tell us briefly about your journey to Islam?

I have in my life dabbled in a variety of religions, and always knew it didn't have the answer. I certainly wasn't looking to become of any faith.

I sought only academic knowledge in my lifelong quest to broaden my knowledge on many topics.

I have lived a difficult and complex life — things most people have never seen or could even begin to imagine, and then from reading one book I found that Islam had some answers.

However, the reality is, Allah had chosen for me to be guided and every single moment of my life led me to the day and time I picked up that book by the compassion and grace of Allah.

How was your first Ramadan?

I was worried, I had tried to "practice" fasting some days prior to Ramadan, and never made it past late morning without coffee and food.

A chance to purify your soul

SISTER Bayaan Grant, committee member of Sister's House and chapter manager for New Muslim Care in Brisbane, experienced her first Ramadan during a hot Queensland summer but found that within a week she became accustomed to fasting.

Tell us briefly about your journey to Islam?

Each revert's journey back to their natural state (fitrah) is different and is sometimes hard to adequately describe in a sentence or two because it is such a personal and private experience. Alhamdulillah, all I can say is Allah opened my heart to the Truth after three weeks of studying Islam and I said my Shahadah in the year 2000.

How was your first Ramadan?

I was excited the night before my first day of fasting and went to bed in happy anticipation of waking up and eating suhoor. Well, things didn't go as I expected and I forgot to set my alarm for suhoor so I missed it and woke up at fajr!

I tried not to get upset because I had learned about the blessings of suhoor and was sad because I had missed out on it on my very first morning of Ramadan. Alhamdulillah, I ended up just accepting what Allah had ordained for me that day, and the rest of my Ramadan went really well. (I've never missed suhoor since!)

My first Ramadan was a very emotional time for me in a positive way and I really enjoyed going to iftar (breaking fast) at the local masjid. I loved being invited to people's homes for iftar and sharing in the blessings of their generous and righteous company.

What challenges did you face?

My first Ramadan was in the middle of a scorching Queensland summer and in the days leading up to it I was scared that I wouldn't be able to fast properly. What if I got hungry or thirsty? What if it was too hot and I fainted?

Waking up in what seemed like the middle of the night to eat suhoor with my body wondering what on earth was going on was a big challenge, but after the first week I was OK.

What was the most significant lesson you learnt from observing the fast?

That it's vital to develop tawakkul (reliance) upon Allah; realising that He knew I was trying my best to fast and not only fulfil my obligation of fasting, but to actually enjoy the hardships that come along with it. Also I learned that fasting is not just about refraining from physical things like eating, drinking and intimate relations with my spouse, but it's also about refraining from backbiting, gossip and avoiding anger. Ramadan is a chance to purify not only your body but more importantly your soul.

What advice can you offer those who will have their first Ramadan this year?

Equip yourself with useful knowledge about why Muslims fast and its advantages from a physical and spiritual perspective. Seek support, advice and companionship from other Muslims. Don't stress too much about things and go easy on yourself. Sincerely ask Allah to make your fasting easy for you and not hard. Make the Qur'an your companion this Ramadan and study a reliable explanation of the Qur'an (tafseer) as much as you can.

However, as I have discovered in so many ways, Allah is endlessly merciful and never makes things too hard for us. Besides being a little irritable mid-afternoon, and pushing through mornings without coffee, it was surprisingly easy.

I didn't have anyone to share iftar or evening meals, or prayer with, which was a bit lonely.

However, I loved being up early, having breakfast (can't recall the proper name for it) pondering the day, the purpose, and making my dua and setting my resolve to succeed.

What challenges did you face?

Mostly just the irritability which affected me at work in a negative way, each evening knowing it was something I needed to work on the following day, but failing.

What was the most significant lesson you learnt from observing the fast?

The absolute blessing that I live in a society where I do have the ability to open the refrigerator door at any time I like, to choose from a variety of wonderful, tasty, healthy food, when so many of our brothers and sisters do not have anything close to that luxury.

Although throughout my life, I have always been very grateful for what I have, I learned it on an even deeper level. To acknowledge what we have, and to reach out to those who do not have.

What advice can you offer those who will have their first Ramadan this year?

Put your trust in Allah, don't fret too much, don't go into it with too much fear or negativity, and you will be amazed at the way your thoughts change. It changes you, in such an amazing way, the hunger becomes a prize to have a constant reminder of your obedience to Allah, and a sense of one with the Ummah. Keep a journal of your daily achievements, what you can improve.

I am again, nervous, wondering if I can do it, but I did it — so of course I can do it again.

I want to work on reading and learning and praying even more this year than last, and really appreciating the reason we were commanded to fast, and stay on the path set by Ibrahim (pbuh) and Muhammed (pbuh).

Dawud Tuckwell

WHEN I was 9, I used to love going down to Melbourne (from my hometown of Seymour) for either attending a football game or to visit a relative.

When we drove down Sydney Road, I loved looking out of the car window at the women wearing hijab and the Muslim men with beards. Since I was really young, I always believed that women who wear modest hijab (or even niqab) are the most beautiful women on earth.

I would go back home each time wanting to find out what these people believed in and why they wear hijab/grow a beard. At age 12, I found that I believed in just about everything that Muslims believed in.

However, I was living in a country town, with no other Muslims and where everyone knew everyone else. I was too worried to embrace Islam openly, feeling people would not accept me and that I would feel isolated. It was because of this that I started to become deeply depressed and would later need years of treatment from my depression. I was in and out of hospital and was given heaps of medication for many years.

After many years of feeling heavily depressed, I felt that enough was enough. I could no longer "wear a mask" by living a life I was not comfortable with.

In September 2009, I finally got the courage to attend an Eid Festival and declared my shahadah. I felt I was right at home when I was walking amongst, what would soon become, my brothers and sisters. I loved being surrounded by hijabists/niqaabis and men with beards. As I was saying my shahada I started crying and after said just two words when asked why I was crying. I simply said "I'm home".

I was faced with one big challenge after my reversion. I found it hard to find suitable support groups for new Muslims. I did, though, (through social media, mostly)



find many brothers and sisters that were willing to help me and later becoming friends with me.

I was still living in Country Victoria, which was still a test for me, seeing as I was away from any Muslim community.

I met my wife just a few weeks before my first Ramadan. My wife is the most wonderfully supportive, modest, kind and loving woman on Earth. She was also wearing hijab and modest clothing so I felt that I had found my dream wife.

She is very knowledgeable about the deen and has been helping me become a better Muslim.

Having such a knowledgeable, practising Muslim wife helped me no ends through the month of Ramadan. I managed to get through my first Ramadan with little hassle. From the day I became Muslim, to the day I married the most wonderful muslimah, to my first Ramadan, right up till now, I feel that I have improved both as a person, but more importantly, as a Muslim.

Becoming a Muslim has made me become a better person. My life has purpose and I don't ever want to imagine how my life would have been if I hadn't accept the true way to live life.

As days go by, I am slowly submitting a little more and more, and slowly walking away from the old me. Life could not be better.

All praise and thanks is due to Allah.

Ramadan Message from Muslims Australia – AFIC President

In the name of Allah the most Merciful, the most Gracious.

Assaaamu Alaikum,

I am honoured and privileged to send you this message of *Ramadan*, the most important and auspicious month of the Islamic calendar. *Ramadan* is an incomparable blessing from Allah in so many ways. During this holy month, fasting, prayer, charity, and in fact all good deeds ordered by our Creator are rewarded manyfold when compared to other days and months of the year. *Ramadan* is a time of assessment of our spiritual health and is like spring when everything comes to life, dry grass and trees start to thrive and flowers bloom after a cold winter.

Ramadan is a time when we are urged to practise our humanity towards Allah's creatures, to recognise and practise the goodness that Allah has created within us as human beings, showing sympathy for the plight of those who may be suffering or in need and in fact placing ourselves in the position of others less fortunate, to experience their plight. It is a time to reflect on the direction of our lives and our priorities and on the relationship with family, friends, neighbours and indeed humanity in general. Let us also not lose the opportunity to strengthen our relationship with our Creator.

We are reminded of the Last Sermon of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the Plains of *Arafat* when he spoke about the upcoming month of *Ramadan*. We should carefully read and ponder over this message of the Prophet before every Ramadan to prepare ourselves mentally and physically for the sacred month. He (peace be upon him) said:

"Oh people! A great month is coming to you, a blessed month and a month in which there is one night that is better than a thousand months. A month in which Allah has made it compulsory upon you to fast by day, and voluntary to pray by night. Whoever draws nearer to Allah by performing any of the voluntary good deeds in this month shall receive the same reward as is for performing an obligatory deed at any other time. And whoever discharges an obligatory deed in this month shall receive the reward of performing seventy obligations at any other time. It is the month of Sabr (patience), and the reward for sabr is Heaven. It is the month of kindness and charity. It is a month in which a believer's sustenance is increased. Whoever gives food to a fasting person to break his fast, shall have his sins forgiven, and he will be saved from the Fire of Hell, and he shall have the same reward as the fasting person, without the latter's reward being diminished at all."

So, my sisters, brothers, and friends, let us take this golden opportunity to reap the rewards that Allah *swt* has promised for those who patiently persevere in His Obedience and His Pleasure.

On behalf of my Executive Committee members and staff of Muslims Australia AFIC, I wish you all a blessed, happy and rewarding *Ramadan*. May Allah *swt* accept our fasting, prayer and good deeds during this holy month! Amin.

I also wish all our readers and all Australians a Happy *Eid ul Fitr* to mark the completion of a blessed and glorious *Ramadan*, Insha'Allah.

Ramadan Kareem
Kul Aam wa antum be Khair

Hafez Kassem, President, Muslims Australia (AFIC)

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LOCATIONS



GRAHAM PERRETT MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MORETON

The Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Attorney-General George Brandis plan to roll back the protections that the *Racial Discrimination Act* (RDA) provides Australians against racist speech. Please find below excerpts from my submission:

Since the Coalition Government flagged changes to s18C of the RDA I have spoken with a wide variety of people within Moreton and they are gravely concerned about the proposal. Most see the changes to the RDA as significantly weakening protections against racist hate speech in Australia. They also fear that it will open the door to bigotry.

The RDA has served Australia well for almost 20 years. The legislation encourages harmony in the community. It strikes the right balance between freedom from bigotry and freedom of speech.

It saddens me that racism exists in the multicultural Australia of today. Consequently, we need strong laws that encourage harmony within society yet target discrimination. Therefore, for the Abbott Government to promote legislative changes that allow people to be bigots, sends the wrong message to our multicultural communities.

The new proposal explicitly permits racial vilification and intimidation "in the course of participating in the public discussion". This broad exemption sends a dangerous signal.

It would serve the Abbott Government well to realise that this can only occur when we work together to facilitate racial tolerance, not destroy it. We must ensure that we never return to a time when racism is more readily accepted.

I promise you that I will continue to fight against this short-sighted and harmful amendment.

Yours sincerely

Graham Perrett MP
Federal Member for Moreton



Need help with a Federal Government issue? Contact my office:

L1, Sunnybank Times Square, 250 McCullough St, Sunnybank Qld

P 07 3344 2622

E graham.perrett.mp@aph.gov.au

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Of Bananas and Basketball owners

Nasya Bahfen*

April was a month in which racism in sport came under the spotlight.

WHEN Chelsea halted Liverpool's march to the English Premier League title, it was Demba Ba who scored the first goal. In his usual fashion, the French-born striker for the Senegal national side prostrated on the ground in *sajda*, the Muslim prayer ritual. A Twitter user not familiar with Ba's Islamic faith described the celebration as 'odd'. While not knowing about the *sajda* is hardly a crime, what followed the match was a little more serious, as a Liverpool fan tweeted that he heard a racial slur directed at Ba from a fellow Reds supporter, and subsequently reported it to both English football's anti-racism arm Kick It Out, and Liverpool itself who are now investigating the report.

That allegation of a racial slur made against Ba was overshadowed this week by two incidents demonstrating that racism is an issue that continues to plague different sports on different continents. The reaction of Barcelona defender Dani Alves to a banana being thrown at him by a Villarreal fan and the NBA's lifetime ban on LA Clippers owner Donald Sterling's secretly recorded displeasure at his (ex?) mistress bringing black people to basketball games have put the spotlight on racism in sport, again.

Because sport is seen as the great leveler where differences in race and religion - theoretically - vanish on the pitch or the court, and the match or game becomes a battle fought on skill alone, we are shocked when we are confronted with the reality that people who hold racist views or make racist remarks, still exist, and they have major ownership stakes in, play for, or are ardent supporters of, sporting teams. This reality - as represented by Sterling's comments, or the actions of the Villarreal and Liverpool fans accused of the slurs against Alves and Ba (or in Melbourne the actions of the young Collingwood fan involved in the racist slur against the Sydney Swans' Adam Goodes) - is confronting. It shatters utopian ideals we might have of sport as a type of democratizing force for good.

General statements about whether sport has done enough to combat racism are limited, without an appreciation of both the various social and political contexts in which these debates take place, and the different means and methods of combatting racism used by different sports (or even within the same sport, as administered by different national bodies). The voices

condemning Sterling (of which there are many) compete with the voices of those who say he's the victim of a crime (such as this one). And both compete with voices such as that of the all-time leading scorer for the NBA, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, whose assessment of the Sterling case assessment is worth reading more than once to grasp the nuance of his argument (that while Sterling is unequivocally the villain, the outrage that accompanied the recordings is both morally ambiguous and a little late given the Clippers owner's previous form in this area). The inalienable right to freedom of speech as espoused by the Constitution of the United States is the backdrop against which these voices compete to be heard. In other countries such an inalienable right does not exist, for example in sports-mad Australia, where a debate is raging over whether a proposed repeal of a part of the Racial Discrimination Act will represent a victory for free speech or the removal of a necessary law to maintain racial harmony.

Different sports deal with racism in different ways and in different jurisdictions - a key point in a sport such as football, where clubs compete domestically as well as against international opponents. Depending on the league, sanctions range from points deductions, fines, bans of players and individual supporters, and the forcing of sides to play 'behind closed doors' or with the full, or partial, closure of stadiums - which effectively punishes them financially (through preventing revenue from ticket sales). There is a recognition - from the players, for example - that some leagues have been more active in the severity and implementation of such sanctions. English football's Kick It Out organisation, to which the Liverpool fan reported the slur he heard against Chelsea's Demba Ba on Sunday night, celebrates twenty one years of a sometimes criticised and often lauded existence. It's heartening to see the outpouring of support for Alves from his own and other clubs and FIFA, and recognition for campaigns like Kick It Out, or the pro-active diversity programs conducted by the AFL which have been lauded as example that other sports might learn from. Reading the ongoing instances of racism in sport as a sign that such programs and severe sanctions don't work misses the point. Instead, these incidents are a sign that both anti-racism programs and severe sanctions in sport need to continue.

Dr Nasya Bahfen is a Senior Lecturer in Media at the University of New South Wales and a community ambassador for AFL Multicultural Programs and the AFC Asian Cup 2015.



Nooruddean
@BeardedGenius



"@Smudge1962 Odd celebration from Ba
pic.twitter.com/AR7iTRqloO
Same obscure religion as me mate. In fairness there's only 1.8 billion of us.

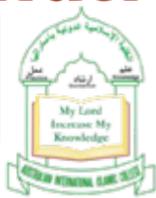
12:24am - 28 Apr 14



On social media, a user responds to a query about the goal celebration of Chelsea player Demba Ba
Source: Twitter

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The Australian International Islamic College (Durack Campus) held its 12th Annual Quran Recitation Competition on the 29th and 30th of April 2014. Alhamdulillah the Quran competition was a great success with 194 students participating across all year levels of Prep to year 12.

There was a lot of enthusiasm from our students who recited their selected Surahs from the Holy Quran in front of the audience. Congratulations to the overall winner of the competition; Hasna Yousaf of Year 5.

The purpose of this Quran competition was to encourage all students to read each and every letter from the Quran with its correct pronunciation and with the rules of Tajweed.

The College was fortunate to have Imam Muhammad Aslam of Algester Masjid to be one of the judges. The Imam advised everyone on the importance of bringing the teachings of the Holy Quran into our lives. Our students were also advised on how they can improve their recitation. Such feedback from the judges is vital for our students' improvement of their Quran recitation and Inshallah will be followed up with our respected Quran teachers of the College.

The College would like to congratulate all winners and participants of the competition and would like to also thank all parents and teachers for making this Quran competition a sensation. We pray to Allah S.W.T. may Allah make us all from the people of the Quran and the people of Jannah, Ameen.



Main Campus: 724 Blunder Road, Durack QLD 4077 Tel: (07) 3372 1400 Fax: (07) 3372 2500 Email: admin@aiic.qld.edu.au
Gold Coast: 19 Chisholm Road, Carrara QLD 4211 Tel: (07) 5596 6565 Fax: (07) 5596 1110 Email: gc.admin@aiic.qld.edu.au
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AIIC wishes all Muslims a very happy
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Ramadan Catering Menu for your family

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SOUPS (serves 10 people)

Yoghurt Soup	\$ 30
Lentil Soup	\$ 40
Meat Soup	\$ 50
Tripe Soup	\$ 60
Pumpkin Soup	\$ 40

BOREKS (serves 10 people)

* Requires 2 days notice

Su Borek - thin layers of pastry with cheese or mince	\$ 50
Bosnian Borek - Cheese or Mince	\$ 70
Gozleme - Mixed fillings	\$ 70

MEALS (serves 10 people)

Lasagne & Salad	\$ 80
(Manti) Turkish Ravioli	\$ 80
Musakka with Rice - Eggplant, Mince, Potato	\$ 80
Meatballs with Potato cubes	\$ 80
Stuffed Capsicum with Rice	\$ 70
Karni Yarik (Eggplant with Mince Stuffing)	\$ 80
Mixed Grill with Salad & Chips / Rice & Vegies	\$120
Mixed Gozleme and Dips	\$70
Kaurma (Stir Fry) Grilled Lamb & Vegies	\$100
Chicken Drumstick with oven-baked Potatoes / Rice	\$90
Vegetable Stew with Lamb	\$80
Creamy Chicken Pasta & Salad	\$70
Kuru Fasulye (Cantelloni Beans) with Rice	\$80
Ali Nazik - Chargrilled Eggplant with chunky Meat, Tomato Paste & Rice	\$90

SALADS (serves 10 people)

Greek Salad	\$ 40
Lamb Hallomi Salad	\$ 50
Pumpkin & Pine Nut Salad	\$ 40
Chicken Ceasar Salad	\$ 50

DESSERTS (serves 10 people)

Puddings - Choc / Vanilla / Strawberry	\$ 30
Pumpkin Sweet with whipped Cream & Walnuts	\$ 50
Caramel Slice	\$ 30
Tiramisu	\$ 50

PLEASE NOTE...

- * All meals are served with Turkish bread
- * 24 hours notice is required for all meals
- * All meals feed 10+ people

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