

O you who believe, respond to the call of Allah and His Messenger when He calls you to that which would give you life...

# Khilafah

JUMADA II - RAJAB 1431 ... JUNE 2010 ... ISSUE: 11 *magazine*

## Israeli Terror on the Seas



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# NEWSBITES



## KYRGYZSTAN VIOLENCE

Over 900 people have been injured, and almost 70 killed in Kyrgyzstan in early June following 'ethnic' riots in the Southern city of Osh. Only two months ago over 80 people were killed as Kyrgyzstan underwent a bloody revolution where the former President Bakiyev was thrown out of office replaced by Roza Otunbayeva as Interim Prime Minister.

Only weeks before the coup Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. envoy to Afghanistan, visited Kyrgyzstan and 'exchanged views with President Bakiyev. Following the visit the website 'Russia Today' reported that "the United States had announced \$5.5 million to assist Kyrgyzstan in building a training centre for special units to combat terrorism in Batken." ' They quoted Alexander Kniazev, director of the regional Bishkek branch of the CIS Institute think-tank about the centre as saying "The United States could use this centre to meet its needs in Central Asia. The slogan of fighting terrorism is only a pretext to achieve American goals as is the case in Iraq and Afghanistan", adding "The United States is seeking through these projects in Central Asia to challenge and compete with Russia and China in the region."

As the two old rivals play their new 'Great Game', Muslim bodies remain mere pawns to be sacrificed.

## GERMAN PRESIDENT RESIGNS AFTER EXPOSING REAL INTERESTS

Germany's president, Horst Köhler, resigned after he suggested military deployments were central to the country's economic interests. Köhler, 67, was accused of advocating a form of "gunboat policy" after saying that a large economic power like Germany, with its significant global trading interests, must be willing to deploy its military abroad. In

a radio interview after a visit to German troops in Afghanistan, Köhler, a former head of the International Monetary Fund, said that the German public was finally coming to terms with the concept that their country could no longer avoid involvement in military missions, which helped "protect our interests, for example, free trade routes, or to prevent regional instability, which might certainly have a negative effect on our trade, jobs and income".

Koehler has been singled out not because of these views, which are fully consistent with German interests abroad, but because he has made them public.



## DESPITE THE RHETORIC THE RELATIONSHIP REMAINS

Pledging never to forsake the Palestinian people, Turkish PM Erdogan likened the Israeli killings of Palestinians to Turkish civilian deaths caused by his conflict with Kurdish separatist militants. "They killed the babies in their mothers' arms like the terrorists here. They killed innocent children on their bicycles," he also called Israel: "a festering boil in the Middle East".

Yet Turkey later confirmed that they would take no action against Israel including its numerous military, economic and diplomatic relations when Deputy PM Bulent Arinc stated in an interview with the NTV news channel: "to assume everything involving another country is stopped in an instant, to say we have crossed you out of our address book, is not the custom of our state."

The regimes surrounding Israel remain the strongest defenders of Israel, despite what they say to quell public anger and outrage.



## AFGHAN EXIT STRATEGY: NOW IT'S ALL CHANGED...

The US has discovered nearly \$1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan, far beyond any previously known reserves and enough to fundamentally alter the Afghan economy and perhaps the Afghan war itself, according to senior American government officials. The previously unknown deposits - including huge veins of iron, copper, cobalt, gold and critical industrial metals like lithium - are so big and include many minerals that are essential to modern industry. US officials believe that Afghanistan could now be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world.

Strange that the US which doesn't really have the time or resources to focus its efforts on rebuilding what they've destroyed, but can readily send geological teams to all corners of Afghanistan to survey for vital mineral supplies. Will the Americans use this carrot to entice the British and Nato troops to stay longer in Afghanistan?

## INDONESIAN PRESIDENT CLAIMS INDONESIA WILL NEVER BE ISLAMIC STATE AGAIN

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has attacked the concept of the establishment of an Islamic state governed by Shariah law calling on all Indonesians to join the government in combating "terrorism". "I call for all Indonesian people to join together in saving the nation, saving our people, saving us all from the terrorism threat and from irresponsible parties that act beyond the limits of humanity," Yudhoyono said at Halim Perdana Kusuma airport in East Jakarta before leaving for an informal visit to Singapore. By conflating terrorism with striving to re-establish the Islamic state Yudhoyono is trying to turn the Muslim population against the concept of the Islamic state, a battle he is losing.

# Editorial

Only Armies of the Khilafah will take up the duty to lift the siege of Gaza and liberate Palestine

There have been road convoys and flotillas heading for Gaza for many months now, with sincere people - Muslim and non-Muslim - wishing to see the lifting of the siege, to ease the lives of the elderly, women and children. Their aim was to draw the attention of the world to Gaza. Many wished them well. Even some rulers in Muslim lands cheered for them.

Yet, on the morning of 31 May, Israel 'greeted' the latest aid flotilla with battleships and an armed invasion in international waters, murdering 9 of the aid workers and injuring and imprisoning others.

We pray those Muslims who died on that day are shaheed. But we curse those rulers who did nothing, or felt it better to cheer the unarmed aid workers, rather than to send their own trained, well equipped, well armed armies to do their duty and end the siege.

It is too little, too late, for the illegitimate criminal regimes in Muslim lands to condemn the actions of the criminal Israeli entity after they did what they have done so many times before - in Gaza, Jenin, Lebanon, and so on.

It is demeaning for them to call upon the United Nations Security Council - who created Israel and whose resolutions Israel ignores - unless it was merely to show the hypocrisy of the UN Security Council.

It is humiliation to wait for NATO to

leap to action to avenge the murder of Muslims from Turkey, as they did to avenge the 9/11 deaths by invading Afghanistan - for which the Turkish government readily sent troops.

It is laughable to see the calls for an Arab League Summit to end the siege of Gaza - especially when Hosni Mubarak, the leader of one of the strongest Arab states - has been at the forefront of enforcing this murderous siege.

And to suggest that there can be a 'peace process' with an entity that murders and maims (remember the White Phosphorus 18 months ago), that imprisons and keeps a civilian population in poverty and servitude, is beyond a joke. The conclusion of any such peace process would be nothing more than institutionalising the imprisonment of the Muslims of Palestine - but calling it a 'two-state solution'.

Resistance of occupation is noble - but it is not liberation. Charity and humanitarian convoys are noble - but they are not a solution.

Young or old, man or woman, sane or otherwise - everyone knows that ending the oppression of the people of Gaza or West Bank cannot happen unless the political entity that is Israel is itself removed - and that requires the mobilisation of the armies that encircle it. Yet these criminal rulers will never do that. They are the real Israeli defence force. The only way this would happen is if these rulers were removed and replaced with the sincere leadership of the Khilafah. Today, the Ummah lacks the leadership that would take up this duty

and lacks the Khilafah system that would account a leader who neglected such a duty.

It is a duty on Muslims to remind to oppose such rulers who aid Israel and neglect to aid the oppressed of Palestine because the Messenger of Allah (saw) said **"If the people witness an oppressor and they do not take him by his hand (to prevent him) then they are close to Allah encompassing them in a punishment."** (al-Tirmidhi)

But also, we pray that Muslims who are awakened by these latest murders join this growing work around the world for the Khilafah.

The coming month of Rajab 1431 sees the 89th anniversary of the destruction of the Uthmani Khilafah - the last time the Ummah had a leader, and the last time when Islam was held in Izzah and Muslims could live in security.

Over the coming month Hizb ut-Tahrir will be holding events across the world to remind people of the Islamic obligation of Khilafah - and the overwhelming need for this Khilafah to end the oppression, occupation and exploitation of Muslims, the degradation of Allah's deen by His enemies and the numerous crises around the world caused by Capitalism and Kufr.

The events will culminate in the International Khilafah Conference in Beirut on the 18th of July, that will address the various regional and International crises that exist in the World today and give the Islamic solutions to them - and remind the world of the urgent need of the time.

For it is only the Khilafah that would mobilise the armed forces of the State to liberate land and protect Muslims - 'the Imam is a shield' the Prophet (saw) said (narrated by Imam Muslim). And only the Khilafah could establish a rule that would harmonise people in the region and replace the fear and insecurity we live under, with the peace and security of Islam.

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# ISRAEL: Terror on the Seas



The state of Israel once admired for its pluckiness, is now considered a pariah by most of the world. Criticised extensively for its treatment of the Palestinians, it has now faced unprecedented censure for its attack on a humanitarian ship in international waters. Despite extensive public relations attempts from the Israelis to justify the events of the 31 May as self-defence, most of the international

community aren't buying Israel's cocktail of propaganda, edited videos and lame excuses. Indeed Israel's recent track record allows it no benefit of the doubt, a brutal war against Gaza, an illegal assassination in Dubai using fake passports from states purportedly its allies, revelations that Israel engaged in nuclear cooperation with apartheid South Africa and now a bloody massacre of civilians on a humanitarian

ship in international waters. This was no ordinary massacre. According to autopsy reports, nine Turkish activists were shot a total of 30 times and five died of gunshot wounds to the head. The results showed that a 60-year-old man, Ibrahim Bilgen, was shot four times in the temple, chest, hip and back.

Yet incredibly despite this recent track

record, many supporters of Israel still can't fathom what all the fuss is about. In their paranoid world, nothing else exists except the "security" of Israel, for them any means justifies the end of overall Israeli hegemony. To them no other principle is important, torture, barbaric occupation, throwing your allies under the bus are all justified to protect the Israeli state. For them security is first, second, and third and if the rest of the world doesn't understand this, the solution is to stick to the same brutal policies but just ratchet up the public relations. Instead of reflecting about the devastation they have caused to the lives of the dozens of families whose lives they have just destroyed, Israeli apologists are instead seeking further retribution.

For instance Caroline Glitch writing in the Jerusalem Post said "it is time for Israel to launch a counter-offensive. Its representatives at the UN should demand an investigation into Turkey's illegal sponsorship of the pro-Hamas flotilla. They should raise such protests in every UN forum and continue to protest until they are thrown out of the meetings, and then return the next day to relaunch their protests. The Justice Ministry should issue international arrest warrants against the flotilla's organizers and participants and prepare

**In their paranoid world, nothing else exists except the "security" of Israel, for them any means justifies the end of overall Israeli hegemony.**

indictments against them for trial in Israeli courts."

For those who point to Israeli pluralism as a mature democracy, this may exist in the case of some journalists and other voices who have bravely criticised Israel's actions, but as for the political establishment there is little disagreement on Israel's modus operandi. In a disgraceful and repugnant scene at the Israeli Knesset an Arab member Haneen Zoabi who had been on the actual ship was repeatedly heckled and threatened by numerous Knesset members who called



her a traitor and a terrorist, eventually forcing her to cut short her remarks. It should be noted that it isn't just Netanyahu who supported the flotilla massacre. It was ordered by Ehud Barak

provided it - a proven military and political fiasco with worldwide shock waves.... If anyone, either in Israel or the rest of the world, thought this bungling government had an alternative, they have been completely misled."

defence minister from the "dovish" Labour party and supported to the rafters by the west's favourite "moderate" Tzipi Livni in charge of that "centrist" party Kadima. With such "moderates" like Barak and Livni on the side of Israeli brutality, who actually needs the lunatic far right of Israeli politics? As Gideon Levy writing in Haaretz says "Israel has no opposition. The last opposition died in 1977. Since Menachem Begin's rise to power, the opposition has become mute. A democracy with no opposition is like a fish without water. If anyone still needed proof of this, the flotilla episode

Israel's illegitimacy and isolation grows day by day like a cancer that starts in one organ and slowly seeps through the whole body. Israel is not just slipping down the slope to pariahdom but it has reached there with energy to spare. The international community has given Israel a pass for too long, turning a blind eye to atrocities that would make many of the world's worst dictators blush. Even Israel's influential Diaspora can no longer defend the indefensible. Many of these from all across the spectrum from politicians to entertainers are either criticising Israel, challenging its propaganda or calling for sanctions and boycotts. What would have been called piracy by any other nation was not even condemned by Barack Obama; he was too busy





“kicking the ass” of BP. Yet an illegal attack on a NATO member ship killing civilians by a non NATO member should have automatically activated a collective response by NATO. Occupying Afghanistan and killing Afghan civilians while ignoring Israel’s brutal attack on a NATO ship in international waters clearly illustrates that NATO’s agenda has been hijacked by the United States for its own political ends.

The attempt by Israel to justify its massacre on a ship carrying humanitarian goods to Gaza is itself symptomatic of a nation that has lost all perspective. Elite specially trained Israeli commandoes with the entire Israeli navy at their disposal claimed they were fighting for their lives, cowed by people who had a few knives, clubs

and shaving razors at their disposal: what a pathetic response from one of the foremost militaries in the world. Yet they shouldn’t have been on the ship in the first place. Complaining about illegally boarding a ship in international waters would be a bit like Somali pirates complaining they got a hostile reception from a crew of a ship they were trying to seize. From Israel’s perspective the goal was to protect Gaza from receiving any goods that would contravene Israeli security. Yet they’ve created the threat from Gaza with their brutal occupation of Palestine since 1948. They implement an apartheid system treating Palestinians as second class citizens and prisoners in their own lands and then wonder why people hate them so much. They create settlements in the west bank and Jerusalem and then are

amazed when people get angry and want to reverse the occupation. Israel blames everyone for its insecurity, the Palestinians, Hamas, Turkish NGO’s, Iran, the UN, the organised left, the Goldstone Commission, Hezbollah, the Muslim world, with even some blaming Barack Obama for their misfortune. Yet Israel can blame as many actors as it can, yet its insecurity is clear for all to see, it comes from its own barbaric occupation and its inhumane policies it has carried out since 1948. It claims Hamas is a terrorist organisation, yet doesn’t see the irony that its own founding fathers were terrorists who undertook massacres to create Israel in the first place. It claims to care about security yet creates mass insecurity for the Palestinians; it cites rocket attacks from Gaza yet says nothing about its own occupation and multiple wars it has initiated in Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world.

Israel therefore grows weaker by the day with the strategic situation now going against it. Israel’s strength since 1948 has been based on three pillars. The first was to play the “victim” card to portray itself as the underdog, the country that was surrounded by mortal enemies, the Israeli David to its Goliath enemy. For many years, the enemy was Egypt, then after 1979 it became Syria and Iraq, now it has become Iran. The need for a constant mortal enemy has some basis, as Israel lacks strategic depth and cannot afford to lose a major conflict. Yet Israel has taken advantage of this to the point that it can possess a covert nuclear arsenal and receive no diplomatic sanction while Iran which has no verifiable arsenal can be continuously punished for an alleged attempt to gain such a capability. As part of this “victim” strategy, there is a concerted strategy by Israel and its supporters in the media, think tanks and foreign political medium to label all its detractors as anti Semitic, or terrorists or hopelessly naive, or all three. This has been a successful strategy to date as Israel has largely received token slaps on the wrist for what other nations would never have got away with. This strategy was again

executed in the flotilla massacre, when Israeli's PR machine across the globe tried in a vain attempt to portray the Turkish organisation behind the

Middle East would be contaminated with the fallout including Israel itself and oil would rise to a \$1000 a barrel.

## “Israel is gradually turning from an asset to the United States to a burden”.

humanitarian aid as having links to Hamas and Al Qaida and that much of the world's reaction was born out of anti-Semitism or indifference to the fate of the Jewish people. Yet this pillar is now eroding, with much of the world now seeing Israel as the aggressor not the victim. Many parts of the international community no longer are cowed by Israeli attempts to censor criticism of its actions through the false cloak of anti-Semitism.

The second pillar is to project formidable military strength to deter anyone from even thinking about taking Israel on. Israel has relied on its military to keep any nation from even thinking about attacking it. Israel is a small state effectively surrounded by much larger states. Historically the land currently occupied by Israel has not remained independent from the major powers. Whether it was the Babylonians, the Romans, the Persians or the Khilafah, the land has usually been part of a much larger power. Israeli strategists understand that Israel's geographic location and strategic situation is precarious and that having overwhelming military strength is not just a must but a necessity. Yet recent events have shown that the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) is showing deep signs of vulnerability. The 2006 war with Lebanon showed Israel's inability to defeat Hezbollah. Israel's 2009 war on Gaza showed it could not defeat Hamas. Across the region, countries like Turkey, Pakistan and Iran are growing stronger which further negates Israel's military superiority. Though Israel has a nuclear monopoly in the Middle East, this capability is vastly exaggerated. Even if Israel was foolish enough and the Americans allowed it to use such a capability, the whole of the

The third pillar is also eroding. Israel once an asset to the international community now is largely becoming a liability. Most of the Muslim world and developing world has already turned against Israel. Now Europe is increasingly hostile to Israel's brutal occupation. Even in the United States where support for Israeli policies is sometimes greater than even in Israel itself, there are major chinks emerging. Though the main Israeli lobby in Washington is still able to keep American politicians in line, some strategists and key voices in the American military now view Israel as an impediment to furthering US strategic objectives in the Middle East and the wider Muslim world. Israel's brutal policies are damaging America's reputation as well as its own. Centcom Commander Gen. David Petraeus noted in congressional testimony that the perception that the United States favours Israel breeds anti-Americanism.

In a devastating report in January of this year sent to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, Petraeus concluded that the US alliance with an intransigent Israel was increasingly undermining America's standing and influence in the Arab and Muslim worlds and was endangering the United States. As analyst Mark Perry stated in March in Foreign Policy “There are important powerful lobbies in America: the NRA, the American Medical Association, the lawyers and the Israeli lobby. But no lobby is as important, or as powerful, as the U.S. military.” Vice President Biden was also reported in the Israeli press as giving unprecedented warnings to Israel's top officials in March when he said “This is starting to get dangerous for us. What you're doing here undermines the

security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan”. No wonder the chief of Mossad, Meir Dagan, was quoted as saying to a Knesset committee that “Israel is gradually turning from an asset to the United States to a burden”. Indeed the only major constituency in America who still supports Israel as an article of faith is the neoconservative right who see Israel as its proxy in its perpetual war against Islam. Yet as the private US group Stratfor states “Israel is not a country that can survive in isolation... The second Israel becomes a liability to that patron, however the country's vulnerability soars and its survivability comes into question.”

The Muslim world therefore faces a strategic choice, to continue with the failed peace process, which doesn't provide peace to the Palestinians whilst providing a long drawn out process for Israel's benefit. And despite Obama's promise of change in his Cairo speech in 2009, American foreign policy has not changed one iota in its protection of Israel. Or they act to do something independently themselves. Demography, legitimacy, history, and justice is all against Israel. It is time for the Muslim world to press the reset button in its cosy relationship with Israel of tough rhetoric for their publics, alongside private warmth and secret trade deals.

The Muslim world now needs to develop a unified response which can only come through the establishment of the Khilafah. Relying on the west to solve the Palestinian oppression after Bosnia, Rwanda and Iraq is as naive as it is flawed. The west is complicit with Israel in its brutal occupation. It is only the Muslim world by marshalling its combined resources that can solve the Palestinian problem by reversing Israel's occupation, providing security for all citizens irrespective of their creed and providing the stability the region so richly deserves.

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# The Heart of the Democratic Storm



The British Parliament is known as the 'mother of all parliaments' and arguably led the way for democracies in the modern day. Elections for the parliament were held in May 2010 leading to the formation of a new government. We take an objective look at these events.

## Background to the Elections

For over 4 weeks the British media went into over-drive as they covered the elections. Britain is still barely recovering from a recession caused by its disastrous Capitalist financial system; there is record mistrust of politicians and cynicism about the tribal nature of party politics in Britain; the country is still engaged in an unpopular military occupation in Afghanistan; and there are growing social problems that society seems unwilling to confront.

Despite all of this, by the time the election campaign was officially declared in April 2010, the intense campaigning that started some months before in January 2010

seemed to have created a sense of weariness amongst many ordinary voters.

## Media Hype and Entertainment

It was against this background that the media launched an almighty publicity push to generate interest. The coverage was 24/7, sometimes attempting to create news stories when, in truth, there was no substance. It seemed like some newspapers wrote as much about the clothing of the candidates or their wives than their policies. Arguably, the most famous episode or manufacturing an 'important' story was when former Prime Minister Gordon Brown had a difficult discussion with an elderly woman whom he had spoken to politely in public, but in private (and unbeknown to him being recorded by a TV microphone left on after the interview) he confessed to an aide that the discussion had been a disaster and that he thought she was a bigot. It is not 'news' to most people that politicians are two-faced, but the media still managed 2-3 days coverage over it.

The attempt to generate interest in the election peaked with the three set-piece Prime Ministerial debates between the candidates, which is a new phenomenon in Britain. The coverage of these seemed to awaken some interest in politics. But the discussion afterwards was about style more than substance; about who looked best on camera, their body language and their ability to look at the camera.

All of this reinforced the view that the media coverage - debates and all - seemed as much about entertainment, as they did about the serious problems that Britain faced. It was like political 'pop-idol' (a UK TV entertainment show), followed by a penalty shoot out when the election resulted in a hung-parliament (i.e. no party won overall control in the parliament).

## Why this 'style over substance'?

The question arises why the British media places so much image and style over policies and ideas? There are several possible reasons for this.

It has been said, by the political commentator Noam Chomsky, that the media is able to manufacture consent for the political status quo and desensitize ordinary people to serious issues: *"The beauty of our system is that it isolates everybody. Each person is sitting alone in front of the tube, you know. It's very hard to have ideas or thoughts under those circumstances."*

But aside from this, this election illustrated one fact very clearly: that there was no significant difference between the different parties in their policies. They all supported the on-going occupation of Afghanistan; all support Israel; all believe in favouring big



business more than the ordinary man and woman, especially in their decisions over taxation and public spending cuts; they all believe in 'civil partnerships' - where a man can 'marry' a man or a woman 'marry' a woman.

All the parties are now socially liberal and economically liberal - differing only in degrees and in styles of management. As the political commentator Peter Hitchens put it, when referring to the Conservative party replacing the Labour party as the largest party: *"Well, congratulations boys and girls, you've 'got rid of Gordon Brown' and how much better do you feel than you did when he was there? High taxation gone, has it? Grammar schools back, are they? Political correctness has been removed from public life, has it? The EU has been told to clear off, has it? Mass immigration is stopping, is it? Crime and disorder are under control, are they? Marriage has been saved, has it? Britain has pulled out of the idiot war in Afghanistan, has it? The rape of the constitution is over, is it?"* - mocking his readers who hated the old government's policies, which the new government would merely continue.

### **Ideology first, then Party**

Britain has one ideology, secular liberal values in its political and social life, a capitalist shape to its economy, and colonial foreign policy, regardless of the party that is in power. If there was once a wider divide in British Democracy, forced by the existence of the Communist Soviet Union, there is none now - just as it was before the Communist Soviet Union came into being.

This may not be a one-party state but it is a one-ideology state, whose parties' views are very similar. Dominic Lawson, writing in the Independent newspaper said: *'some sharp-eyed academic observers of British politics argue that in the post-ideological era, what remains of political battle is simply a surface conflict between identical middle-class elites of only notionally different outlooks. This is the view of Dr David Runciman, who argues that British politics now closely resembles its form during the 18th century, echoing Lewis Namier's analysis of the battles of that time between the Whigs and the Tories. Namier wrote that the apparent conflicts of principle between those two*

*great parties were illusory, and that this was just a battle for power between cliques: "the political life of the period could be fully described without ever using a party denomination."*'

### **Why have Conservative and Liberal Democratic Parties formed a Coalition?**

There are multiple reasons for this, made possible by the narrow policy gap between the parties.

One reason is that the party with the largest vote - the Conservatives (also called the Tories) - did not win an outright majority and winning power was essential - even if they had to make some concessions.

Another is that any party in power will be forced to take such unpopular measures in the current economic climate, it would be good to share the blame.

Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, warned before the election that public anger over coming austerity cuts will be so severe that whoever wins the next election will be out of power for a generation. So, it suits the Machiavellian Conservatives to have some political cover. It is surely not by accident that new Prime Minister puts his former rival's name first when he refers to the coalition as 'Liberal-Democrat Conservative coalition; or that he has give that party the Cabinet position that will be responsible for making the cuts - Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

One other reason is that Cameron has a good measure of what people want - that is a culture change in politics: more co-operation and less overt hostility. Some have compared Cameron's seizing of this opportunity, against the desires of many in his own party, with his hero and predecessor Benjamin Disraeli who extend voting rights to many who were previously disenfranchised in order to achieve power.

### **Will this new arrangement restore trust in Democracy?**

The current evidence is that it will not. Despite a high profile, show-biz, enthusiastic media frenzy, 35% of people still did not vote in the election. Moreover, no party has serious solutions for Britain's problems: a broken society - to quote David Cameron, the new Prime Minister; a broken political system - to

quote Nick Clegg, the new Deputy-Prime Minister; a financial and economic crisis, that may still turn into a currency crisis - to name but a few of the problems.

Yet - for some - Muslims, watching from afar in our countries, are supposed to look to London and Washington as their political 'qibla', supposed to revere, pray and hope for democracy to solve their problems!

It is a vain hope. If Muslims were once besotted, they are no longer. Indeed, nor are non Muslims. The promise of democracy is not sunshine, but political and social thunderstorms. The former editor of the Times newspaper Simon Jenkins wrote in April 2010: *"Democracy in both America and Britain is coming under scrutiny these days. Quite apart from the antics of MPs and congressmen, it is said to be sliding towards oligarchy, with increasing overtones of autocracy. Money and its power over technology are making elections unfair. The military-industrial complex is as powerful as ever, having adopted "the menace of global terrorism" as its casus belli. Lobbying and corruption are polluting the government process. In a nutshell, democracy is not in good shape. How strange to choose this moment to export it, least of all to countries that have never experienced it in their history. The west not only exports the stuff, it does so with massive, thuggish violence, the antithesis of how self-government should mature in any polity. The tortured justification in Iraq and Afghanistan is that elections will somehow sanctify a "war against terrorism" waged on someone else's soil. The resulting death and destruction have been appalling. Never can an end, however noble, have so failed to justify the means of achieving it."*

He is right. And never has the need for humanity been more for the Muslims to embrace the Islamic Khilafah as a system, and to show the world real justice and how a real government should be run - for the people, by the systems of Allah, by the man whom the people have entrusted with authority to execute His (SWT) laws.

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# AFRICOM: The American colonial and military outpost for Africa



Africa is a very rich continent. Not simply in terms of abundant resources but in its geographic significance also, almost the entire continent is strategically important. Sir Henry Morton Stanley, the man who opened up the Congo region to European exploitation

during the 1873-74 Anglo-Ashanti wars, possibly gave the best explanation of the genesis of the conflict. He declared that Africa "is too rich a neighbour to be left with his riches."

Eighty percent of new oil reserves

discovered between 2001 and 2004 came from West Africa, most recently from the Gulf of Guinea and Uganda. In September 2002, the New York Times ran a headline stating "In courting Africa, U.S. likes the Dowry: oil". It quoted the then Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, who said, "Energy from Africa plays an increasing important role in our energy security."

John Ghazvinian in his book *Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil* points out that not only is African oil of high quality, it also bears other significant political advantages; most African countries are not OPEC members, their oil is not owned by powerful state oil companies and the oil is largely offshore, which means "that even if a civil war or violent insurrection breaks out onshore (always a concern in Africa), the oil companies can continue to pump out oil with little likelihood of sabotage and/or nationalist fervour getting in the way." In 2007, countries like Nigeria surpassed Saudi Arabia as the largest suppliers of oil to the United States. It is anticipated that by 2015 the U.S. expects to import more oil from Africa than from the entire Persian Gulf. In that same year President Bush announced the creation of the U.S. Africa Command, known as AFRICOM, which would be fully operational by September 30, 2008.



However, most African states have rejected the idea of establishing a permanent base for AFRICOM, they see it as a threat to their sovereignty and a move to further militarise Africa, maintaining that the last thing Africa needs is more militarisation. Consequently, AFRICOM is still stationed in America's previous European colony of Stuttgart in Germany.

Furthermore, the fear of US designs on Africa harboured by ordinary Africans goes back to the slave trade when a captive was sold and resold as he made his way from the interior up to the coastal point of embarkation like the 'Point of no return' in Cape Coast, Ghana. All the while this was considered a form of trade. However, this is far from 'trade' because the unjust process by which victims of slavery were obtained on African soil was through warfare, trickery, banditry and kidnapping. If the US is permitted to establish a base for AFRICOM, it will be well placed to deploy similar destructive and deceptive tactics in usurping Africa's rich resources.

During a Q & A session with U.S. Senators, the Commander for AFRICOM, General William Ward gave the 'textbook' response for its creation, he said; "I see the establishment of AFRICOM as a wonderful opportunity to efficiently and effectively apply the elements of U.S. national power in ways that help the Africans develop and implement solutions to African concerns."

Conversely, when asked in an interview with Wall Street Journal writer Greg Jaffe, he decrypted the earlier message; "A key mission for U.S. forces (in Africa) would be to insure that Nigeria's oilfields, which in the future could account for as much as 25 percent of all U.S. oil imports, are secure."

The continued deployment of military forces to secure procurement and to control the global delivery system of fossil fuel is a great sign of desperation and attempts to further present it as a humanitarian guard in the war on Terror is far from credible. In addition, the aim is to keep an eye on Africa's Muslim population, which is above 400 million according to the Pew-Research Centre. The United States "equates terrorism with Islam", said one senior Kenyan diplomat, and few African governments wanted to be seen as inviting U.S. surveillance on their own people." In actuality, the causes of anti-American terrorism are better linked with American Foreign policy rather than hatred of Western values.

Presently, camp Lemonier in Djibouti houses 2,400 US personnel who are engaged in counterinsurgency campaigns in Mali, Uganda, Yemen, Somalia (where it is involved in a proxy war with Ethiopia) and as far as Pakistan, Via unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) they savagely kill innocent pregnant women and children.

To allow the United States achieve full-spectrum military dominance over Africa will be one of the greatest crimes of the 21st century, on a scale far worse than the Slave Trade.

Africa needs only to look to the Far East to witness the consequences of allowing American military boots a foothold on the continent. The incumbent Japanese Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama, during his campaign for office promised the people to completely remove the controversial U.S. base on the island of Okinawa. On the contrary, when recently visiting the island, Mr Hatoyama conceded that "realistically speaking, it is impossible" to fully relocate it. Overwhelming pressure from Obama's

administration had come to bear, sending the clear and decoded message that the U.S. would not accept the democratic wishes of the island of Okinawa.

Currently, Africa desperately needs good governance. In the past it possessed strong yet generous leaders like Mansa Musa who was remembered for his overgenerous pilgrimage to Mecca, where he gave out so much gold that it depressed the value in Egypt and caused it to fall for 12 years. He implemented Islam for 25 years, bringing prosperity and stability to Mali. E.W. Bovill commented in his book 'The Golden Trade of the Moors, [1958]' that Mali was "remarkable both for its extent and for its wealth and a striking example of the capacity of the Negro for political organisation".

The first declared revelation of the Holy Quran in the cave at Hira was in 610 AH, and four years later, when the government in Mecca harshly persecuted the Muslims, a party of them migrated to Abyssinia. Mecca then sent emissaries, laden with choicest presents for the Negus, his nobles and chiefs, to get the persons in exile returned to Mecca. On hearing the clear message of Islam from the Muslim exiles the Negus secretly accepted Islam and refused the request of the Meccan envoys and treated the Muslims with honour, pledging his protection to them. Both crestfallen envoys of Mecca had to leave Abyssinia in great shame while the Muslims continued to live there in peace and security for 13 years until they finally left for Medina.

Today, the Muslims in Africa invite the rest of the Ummah spread across the globe to establish Islam. They will offer the same pledge given by their forefathers to protect Islam and the Ummah once again.

■



# Oil leaks speak of a slippery ideology



## Not an exception

After facing one of its worst financial crisis, the United States is facing its worst environmental disaster. Are these lapses and accidents or are they a feature of a system? It is well known that the recent financial crisis was part of a century old business cycle that regularly (every decade on average) forgives the sinners by punishing the innocent. The recent oil leak can be considered part of the damning anthropogenic (man made) environmental impact of the last century. The Gulf War oil spill was 10 times larger, but received next to no cleanup operation on its 800km shoreline, leaving a long term environmental impact. The Ixtoc 1 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was 5 times larger, took 10 months to cap, and the Mexican government-owned company Pemex avoided paying compensation invoking sovereign immunity. All these pale in comparison to the Niger Delta catastrophe. Despite occurring almost on a daily basis for the past 50 years (including ongoing leaks even during this month), the Nigerian

ecosystem never received the media, political and corporate attention that the US based leak has received. Experiencing 7,000 spills in 3 decades with about 300 every year in recent times (approx. 200 times the current BP leak), the Nigerian locals have become accustomed to the double standards in the rhetoric of the President and steps taken by BP to protect the Louisiana shoreline. Yet, similar to the financial crisis, the steps taken by both the US government and the corporations redress neither the causes nor the effects of their own problem.

## Negligence and complicity

On April 20, the Deepwater Horizon platform located of New Orleans, exploded killing 11 people and sank 2 days later. The platform is a property of Transocean and is leased to BP. The spill is estimated to eclipse the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill on the Alaskan coast. BP and the US administration have claimed that an accident of this magnitude could not have been predicted, however new revelations

suggest clear evidence of negligence and even criminality. BP internal documents show concerns of casing collapse raised as early as June 2009. The company however went ahead despite violating safety policies and design standards. Even prior to the explosion, signs of problems were indicated by repeated release of gas from the well, and leaking fluids which limit the proper operation of the device. The US Minerals Management Services after initial decline, approved permission to delay regulatory fortnightly tests of the blowout preventer.

After the explosion, Transocean's lawyers forced rig labourers to forfeit rights to sue in exchange for \$5,000, and a BP official refused to provide testimony using his Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself. BP admitted that drilling operations were 43 days behind schedule, each day costing them \$533,000 to use the rig from Transocean. BP made Transocean agree to modify and expedite its usual procedures and sequence for drilling and well capping. BP also went against warnings of severe gas flow problem by cement contractor Halliburton. BP's decisions to bypass standard practices were all approved by the US government Minerals Management Service.

## Capitalist response

From the beginning, the Obama administration put the perpetrator BP in command of halting the spill and the cleanup, insisting that only BP had the expertise to handle this situation. This following several debacles, where genuine efforts were expectedly compromised by profit motives. BP misled the public and the administration by hiding video evidence of the magnitude of spill, claiming impact would be modest. Despite being ready to join cleanup efforts, BP only

hired a fraction of the Gulf Coast fisherman (rendered jobless by the spill) on the condition that they do not sue for damages. BP used large volumes of a chemical dispersant sold by Nalco (dominated by executives close to BP and Exxon), that is more toxic and less effective. More effective methods such as absorbent boom lines instead of plastic booms have been ruled out due to their cost. But this did not stop BP spending \$50m on image management through television advertising, and a potential \$10bn in dividends this quarter. Also \$1bn in dividends was handed to Transocean shareholders, while fighting to limit liabilities for those 11 killed in the

double hulls. The oil industry lobby was powerful enough to relax this requirement for 25 years, i.e. until 2015 single-hulled carriers can ply US waters. Requirements for remote control shut-off devices as back-up systems in case of spills, stricter safety procedures, and environmental impact studies were all waived in the last decade by regulators at the behest of the industry. The outrage and poor public ratings of the response to the disaster is putting pressure on the US government to take control of the spill. Having supported deregulation or self-regulation across the sectors aimed at removing limitations in profit seeking, the government may still be reticent in reversing the trend, as this could lead to

The state is obliged to take care of any disaster that affects the public at the highest level and is not left up to the devices of a private party.

explosion to \$27m. Any reader can now appreciate what was to come from the November 2009 Times Online headline: "Tony Hayward makes his mark on BP: Ruthless cuts by the new boss have produced results in higher than expected profits".

The US government is amongst the best placed to solve this crisis, as it is able to instantly draw from competent research organisations and industry, not to mention its state agencies that are meant to look after this. The film director who artfully documented the Titanic at more than twice the depth of the current operation is not amused at the BP exclusivity and appalling deep-sea monitoring of the spill. Having had his offer to help rejected, James Cameron quipped "I know really, really, really smart people that work typically at depths much greater than what that well is at", and added that "The government really needs to have its own independent ability to go down there and image the site, survey the site and do its own investigation".

The influence of private businesses on government and regulation is well known, and the relationship of the oil industry with governments is particularly cosy. The 1989 Exxon Valdez catastrophe resulted from oil gushing from a ship ripped open on an Alaskan reef, which prompted the Congress to demand all oil tankers to have

similar calls to regulate other sectors of the economy. Given the poor response to the Katrina disaster and the disproportionate funding of banks and wars, one can be forgiven to lose faith in the existing system in taking care of the welfare of its own citizens, let alone the rest of the world.

#### The Islamic perspective

The Islamic system is fundamentally different in treating needs, aspirations and resources. While other ideologies are man-made, subject to deficient logic and evolution guided by vested interests, the Islamic system is revealed by the Creator (swt). The Islamic economic system provides a comprehensive perspective on distribution, ownership, transactions and the growth of wealth. Within this perspective there is the economic system - an unchanging set of rules that define the scope and boundaries of economic activities; and economic science - best practices in the domain of science and management that can be adopted to enhance the fulfilment of man's needs and aspirations.

The handling of the Deep Horizon oil leak is yet another reminder of the true colours of capitalism. It is also an opportunity to recognize how the Islamic system not only prevents the causes but also enables effective treatment of problems as they arise in the interest of all. The following are some of measures that relate to this

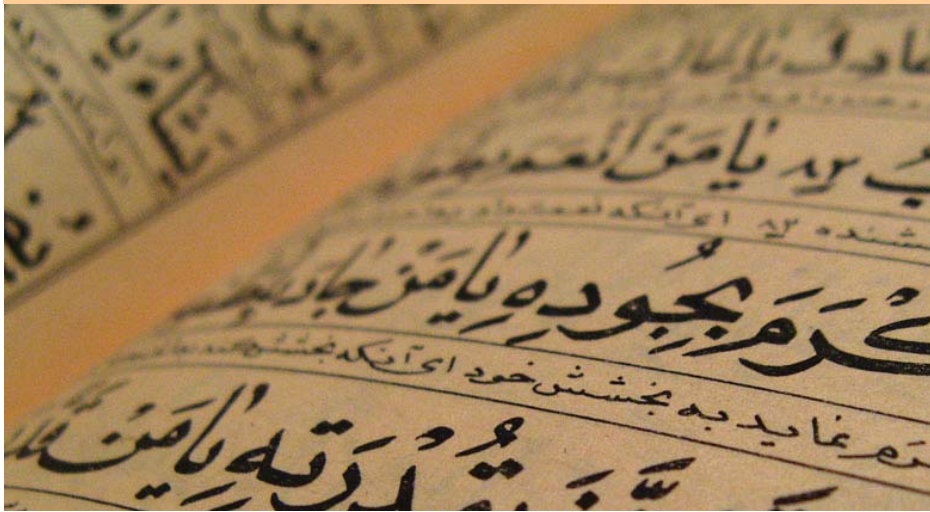
problem:

- Non-depleting minerals and public utilities are public properties in Islam, and hence are not subject to privatisation.
- The state is obliged to take care of any disaster that affects the public at the highest level and is not left up to the devices of a private party.
- The potential for collusion between government and business is prevented by the ruling system that is independent of the private sector.
- In the absence of oil monopolies, and intellectual property, high quality scientific and technological development of cleaner sources of energy would be encouraged, and directly incentivised by the state to reduce environmental degradation.

- Interest-free transactions limit the appreciation of costs and discourage time discounting, over-consumption and over exploitation.
- Company structures and trading regulations do not allow for speculative public trading, where businesses can raise market capitalisation artificially, and can be brought down to its knees merely by perception.

Therefore the scenario of the oil industry would be entirely different to what people experience today. They are public properties, which are managed by the state, and revenues are spent on public needs. On the contrary today, oil fields are "owned" by Princes and corporations, the revenues from which are rarely spent on public needs and development. The prices of fuel would also reflect appropriate costs of extraction, refining and distribution. While extraction costs approximately \$0.012 a litre, current prices exceed \$1.8 per litre in the UK, the majority of which comprises duty and taxes. The Muslim world possesses a majority of oil resources, however it lacks refining capacity and even lacks sovereignty over extraction, use and sale of its resources. The oil scenario alone is sufficient to illustrate the dramatic transformation that would be brought by the forthcoming Islamic state.

# The Qur'an's values are for application



The Qur'an has a special status for Muslims. We treat it with great honour and respect, aware that it is Allah's word and a Mercy from Him, most high. "And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy for believers." [TMQ 17:82]

Muhammad (saw) is reported to have said "The best 'ibadah for my Ummah is reading the Qur'an"

But this Qur'an is not merely a lovely sound, nor only a great symbol of Islam, but it also contains Allah's commands and prohibitions.

For example, Allah says: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqûn" [2:183]

Yet, Allah also says: "O you who believe! Al-Qisâs (the Law of Equality in punishment) is prescribed for you in case

*of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female."* [2:178]

We respond to some rules in the Qur'an with great energy and enthusiasm, motivated by our taqwa, like the Ayah of fasting. But, sadly there is little evidence for existence for the command of Allah for Qisas, using the same form of words as aforementioned command for fasting.

We respond to one with great energy, but for the most part the rules of the other are forgotten, or selectively abused in parts of the world.

Qisas is Allah's solution and punishment for murder. Its absence means murder is not deterred or dealt with around the world as Allah ordained.

It is not that most Muslims have been willingly neglectful of this Ayah, yet we

feel powerless to do anything. Such an Ayah remains 'theoretical' until a state exists willing to implement it.

Islam has made the circulation of currency between all the citizens an obligation, and it has forbidden the restricting of such circulation to a certain group of people to the exclusion of others. If there were a wide gap within society among the individuals in terms of securing the needs, and if society needed to be rebuilt, the state would be under obligation to redress the situation by handing out financial assistance to those in need, until these basic needs are satisfied, and until a balance in the distribution is struck.

How can this fair distribution be achieved without a central leadership for the Muslims? Again, this command can only be fulfilled by a Khalifah, otherwise it too is only theoretical. Today, the wealth of the world is highly concentrated in the hands of a few. A few selfish, irresponsible individuals have caused fiscal chaos, yet it is the poor who suffer worst from their dealings. Never before did we hear of mothers committing the murder of her own children to escape the crippling hunger. People in Pakistan would pride themselves a decade ago - although there was poverty, no one ever starved to death on their streets, unlike in India next door. Now we hear of Muslims phoning muftis on Pakistan TV shows, asking if it is allowed to commit suicide to avoid the hunger!

Islam has ensured the effective



distribution by restricting the methods of ownership and the method of disposal, and also by offering the needy financial assistance.

*"And let those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them in the way of Allah know that a severe and painful punishment is awaiting them."* [TMQ 9:34]

Owning and saving is not dangerous to the economy, on the contrary, it helps increase the economic wealth of the community as

**..while we honour this Qur'an when we read it, and when we respond energetically to some of its rules, we are dishonouring it when we are less enthusiastic to appoint a Khalifah to apply the rest of its rules...**

well as the individual. The danger lies in the hoarding of monies by some individuals with very large fortunes, for the standard of incomes drops in this case, unemployment spreads and people become poor.

If a person were to hoard a sum of money, he would be in fact taking money off the market, and this would lead to a decrease in spending and to the decrease in the income of persons who would have had dealings with that person, had he not hoarded that sum of money; this in turn would lead to a decrease in production, for the demand for goods decreases, and this in turn leads to unemployment and an overall economic decline. Therefore, the hoarding of money leads definitely to unemployment and to economic decline due to the decline in people's incomes.

The difference between money hoarding and saving is that the former means accumulating money without purpose, it means taking money off the market, whereas the latter, i.e. saving, means accumulating money for a purpose, such as saving for a house, or for a wedding, or to set up a business and so on. This type of money accumulating does not affect the market nor does it affect the employment cycle, for it does not lead to taking money off the market, but it means saving up a sum in order to spend it at a given time, thus the money will circulate again once it is invested, there is therefore no harm in saving, unlike hording of money for no real

purpose.

So, how can this hoarding be prevented without a central leadership for the Muslims? Again, this command can only be fulfilled by a Khalifah, otherwise the command is only theoretical.

Many Muslims are used to giving zakat voluntarily to the mosque. No one checks to make sure the right amount has been given, or whether some have neglected to give any at all. However, Allah (SWT) ordered a different method in the Qur'an, that zakat be taken by the State and

allocated according to the Quran. This was implemented by the Prophet (saw) and the Khulafah Rashidun.

*"Take Sadaqah from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allâb for them. Verily! Your invocations are a source of security for them; and Allâb is All-Hearer, All-Knower."* [TMQ 9:103]

The Messenger (saw) used to appoint governors, workers and collectors to take the Sadaqah from the owners of wealth just as he would appoint estimators (Khurraas) to estimate the harvest of the palm and grape trees.

Ibn Sireen narrated: "Sadaqah used to be paid to the Prophet or whoever he had ordered, to Abu Bakr or whoever he ordered, to 'Umar and whoever he ordered, to Uthman and whoever he ordered." This applies even if there are shortcomings in the implementation. Suhayl b. Abi Salih narrated from his father who said: "I asked Sa'ad b. Abi Waqqas, Abu Hurayra, Abu Saïd al-Khudry and Ibn Umar: 'This ruler is doing what you can see (of evil). Should I pay my Zakat to them?' He said: 'They all said: 'Pay it to them.'" Ibn 'Umar said: "Give it to whoever Allah put in charge of your affairs. Whoever is good, it is for his own self and whoever is evil, it is against himself."

This verse and so many hadith talk about taking the zakat:

In the Hadith of Abu Musa and Muaz when the Prophet (saw) sent them to Yemen to teach people the matters of their deen; he said: **"Don't take Sadaqah except from these four: Barley, wheat, raisins and dates."**

Makhul said: "When the Messenger of Allah sent evaluators he would say: **'Be lenient, for there are fruits that are lost due to bad weather, fruits that fall down and those that are used by the eaters.'**"

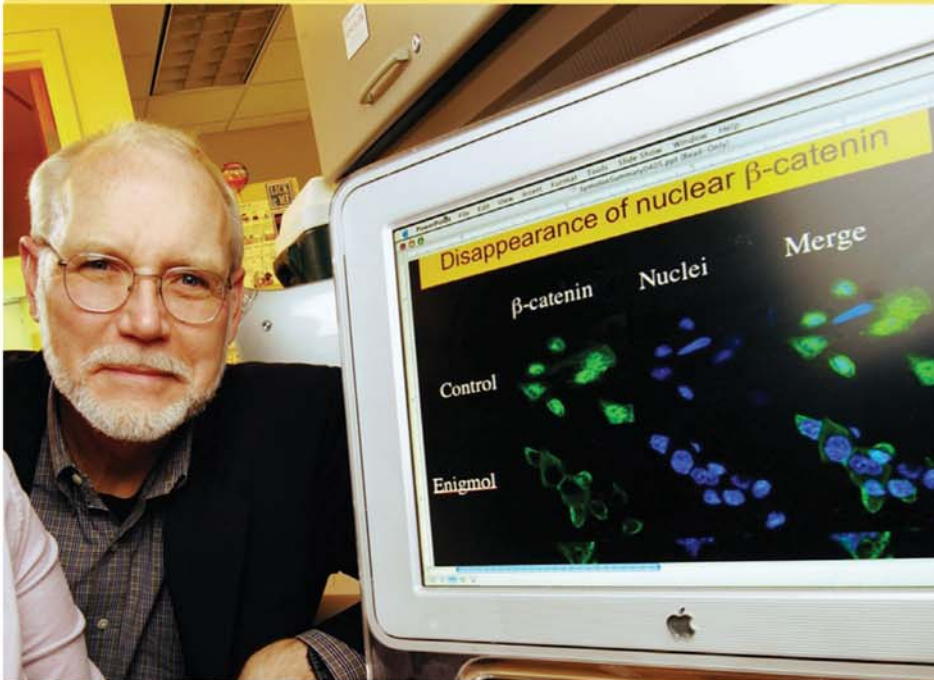
It is not allowed for the Sadaqah collector to aim to take the best of the crops and fruits in Sadaqah due to the Prophet's statement: **"Avoid the best of their wealth."**

So, who is to do this taking, if not the Khalifah?

Many well known verses of the Qur'an mention how the ruling should be according to Allah's rules. Many ahadith explicitly oblige the Muslims to appoint a Khalifah. The examples mentioned above, although not containing a directly stated (mantooq) command to have a ruler ruling by Islam, do oblige it by implication (iqtidaa). The implication is much a part of rule as the mentioned rule itself. It is not to be neglected, just as the other rules that can be fulfilled individually are not to be neglected. So, while we honour this Qur'an when we read it, and when we respond energetically to some of its rules, we are dishonouring it when we are less enthusiastic to appoint a Khalifah to apply the rest of its rules, as necessitated by the wording and nature of the Qur'anic rules themselves. Such neglected rules have defined for Muslims our high values, but remain as such without a method of implementation practically in our lives. That method is there for us to see; we just have to apply it.

*"So, Do you believe in part of the book and reject part of it? And what is the reward of those who do so save ignominy in the life of the world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the most grievous doom"* [TMQ 2:85]

# Synthetic Cell – Man playing God or plagiarising God?



The publication of a paper in the elite US journal *Science* on May 20th from a team of scientists at the J Craig Venter Institute in the US described experiments claiming to the creation of the world's first synthetic cell. The announcement has been received by the mainstream western media with amazement leading to headlines such as "Catholic Church warns Scientists not to play God" and "Has Venter made us all Gods!"

The scientist-entrepreneur Venter has pioneered genomics research and played a major role in the sequencing of the human genome, the genetic material contained in each of our 75 trillion cells which serves as a chemical blueprint for the human species. All cells whether found in higher life forms such as animals and humans or whether in

simple life forms such as bacteria, depend upon the presence of genes for survival and reproduction. The full complement of genes found in the cell is referred to as the genome and contains all the information required by the cell to reproduce itself and in the case of higher life forms, to reproduce the complete organism. By a crude analogy, the genome can be likened to software and the remainder of the cell likened to hardware, which together produces a functional or computing cell.

## **The Science of the Breakthrough**

The team at the Venter Institute has been working for over 15 years to try to answer a very important biological question namely "what is the minimum number of genes required to make a living cell?" To address this question, Venter and his team have been studying

the simplest known living creature, a bacterium called *Mycoplasma mycoides* whose genome has a total of only 475 genes. By way of comparison, the human genome is thought to contain as many as 25,000 genes. The Venter team's paper published on May 20th in *Science* demonstrated technology in which all 475 genes of the *Mycoplasma mycoides* genome, which had been sequenced previously by the group, were synthesised chemically in a test-tube, stitched together to form a complete genome and then transplanted into another closely related but distinct species of bacterium called *Mycoplasma capricolum*. This caused the *Mycoplasma capricolum* bacterium to transform into the *Mycoplasma mycoides* bacterium demonstrating that a completely synthetic genome could reprogramme a living cell once transplanted into it. This led the Venter team to claim that they had created the first synthetic cell which they called "Synthia." For good measure, these scientists also inserted a genetic "watermark" into the synthetic genome to establish laboratory origin of their synthetic genome and cell!

The research marks a major technological achievement since even this small genome of 475 genes is made up of over a million chemical units (termed AGTC) joined together to form a long string of DNA. The research also means that the technology needed to answer the key question of what is the minimal number of genes needed by a living cell to continue to grow and replicate is now in place allowing the Venter team to remove genes one by one from the 475 found in the *Mycoplasma mycoides* genome until it



loses its ability to reprogramme a recipient cell. Using the software analogy, Venter's team will delete lines of code one by one until the software stops working thereby identifying the essential lines of code required for life.

### **Societal reaction**

The reaction of western society to this landmark research has been typically extreme. Newspaper columns have been full of varied opinions ranging from hysteria claiming that Venter is playing God at the peril of humanity to accolade bordering on worship ascribing divine status to Venter for creating new life! No doubt, this technology raises ethical questions as in the near future it will be possible to engineer or reprogramme bacteria on a scale not achieved before, the long term consequences for life on this planet of which are not possible to predict should such bacteria be released into the environment.

So how should Muslims view Venter's work and what does Islam say regarding the development of such technologies? Firstly, we should understand what has and has not been achieved by the research of Venter's team. Venter's team has definitely not created a new life form but has reprogrammed an existing life form into another very closely related existing life form. The synthetic genome built by Venter's team was not original but a replica of an existing genome found in nature and is synthetic only in the method of construction and not in informational content.

That is, Venter's team did not write the software, they merely copied it. Furthermore, Venter's team did not synthesize the recipient cell into which the synthetic genome was transplanted, they used a closely related bacterium found in nature. Therefore, Venter's team copied the software from one computer and transferred it onto another computer, a practise that is illegal in the western capitalist economy. Therefore, it is more accurate to describe Venter's team's claim to having created the first synthetic cell not as "playing God" but rather as "plagiarising God!"

As Muslims we believe that Allah (SWT) is the supreme Creator who created the universe from nothing and who sustains it through a system of fixed universal laws governing the behaviour of matter. He (SWT) created life within the framework of the universal laws and not outside of them. Allah says in translation: *"Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth when He decreeth a thing, He Says unto it only: Be and it is."* [Al-Baqara, 2:117]

*"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of ships through the ocean, for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; here indeed are Signs for a people that are wise"* [Al-Baqara, 2:164]

These verses encourage humanity to discover Allah (SWT) through His (SWT) creation and experiments such as those performed by Venter's team help us to better understand Allah's (SWT) creation. The chemical process of life within the cell also operates according to these fixed universal laws such as the systems that read the instructions within a genome and translate them into chemical life. Therefore, the work of Venter's team has uncovered some new aspects of these laws and confirmed some others, while the technology developed works according to these systems and laws created by Allah (SWT). Venter's research has in fact demonstrated that even the simplest bacterial life form is in reality incredibly complex, requiring hundreds of genes that code for the cellular machinery necessary for growth, movement and reproduction. For all of these genes to have evolved simultaneously by random represents an incredible if not miraculous event in the history of this planet. For them to have become organised into a functioning genome by random, while the machinery required

to read and translate the genetic chemical code into life originated independently and about the same time again by random and all within a cellular structure where the optimal temperature, salinity and acidity were present by random, represents an incredible sequence of events that atheists and evolutionists are simply unable to provide a credible explanation for. In reality, the discoveries of pioneering science should only increase the believers' conviction in the creative power of Allah (SWT) while provoking thought in the minds of atheists and agnostics as to how extraordinarily complex and organised living systems are.

The ethical debate surrounding the developments from Venter's team will continue and Muslims should provide an Islamic perspective upon this issue. By uncovering the mechanisms by which genomes control cells, like the software of a computer, the work of Venter's team opens the door to understanding the role of individual genes in the processes of cellular life which may help us to better understand diseases such as cancer as well as those due to bacterial infections, thereby opening the door to the development of new medicines and possibly cures. Islam has sanctified human life and encourages medical treatment. This is based upon several evidences including the hadith reported by Imam Ahmed from Anas (ra) who said that the Messenger of Allah (SWT) said: *"Allah has created the illness and the cure. So seek the cure."*

Therefore, experiments such those published by Venter's team last week should not be prohibited but encouraged. However, such work should not be the basis for humanity to try and raise herself to the status of Allah (SWT) failing to acknowledge His (SWT) mastery and knowledge in the creation of the simplest forms of life.



# The Attack on the Face Veil: Veiling Political Motives



*"We are an old nation united around a certain idea of human dignity, and in particular of a woman's dignity, around a certain idea of how to live together. The full veil that hides the face completely is an attack on those values.... Citizenship has to be lived with an uncovered face."*  
[President Sarkozy]

France has often witnessed turbulent encounters with its Muslim population – the largest in Europe. It is said across Europe that Muslims don't integrate or assimilate well within secular society and consequently are a threat to liberal values. Secularism sidelines religion to the confines of the personal and the individual. Yet the Muslim woman's dress is seen as anything other than this. The burqa, hijab and niqab are said to threaten the essence of liberal values. And perverse twist to it all is that the well-known womaniser Sarkozy has become a spokesperson for woman's dress and dignity.

The French Government, notorious for its extremist secular outlook, have added niqab to the already banned hijab as something they view as an 'insult' to

secular values. On the 19th of May, the French cabinet approved a bill to ban the niqab in public life. The approval of this bill by parliament will result in the creation of a new offence of "incitement to cover the face for reasons of gender". Those who are caught committing this 'offence' would be liable to a fine of 150 or be forced to take lessons on the values of French citizenship.

Anti-Muslim fervour from the French government has resulted in an increased number of attacks on Muslims, desecration of Muslim graves; women's face veils have been pulled off, and mosques and shops owned by Muslims been vandalised – illustrating the complete lack of tolerance in accepting difference.

#### **Face veil: Why the controversy?**

Debates concerning the face veil amongst Muslims have been centred around whether it is an obligation, recommendation or a matter of choice (mubah) from Allah (swt). What is agreed upon is that the complete hijab (which includes the face veil) were obligatory requirements for the wives of the Prophet

(saw), with a majority regarding the face veil as a matter of choice (mubah).

Therefore, if the face veil is a non-issue amongst Muslims, why has it become a topic of much scrutiny and law making in France?

John R. Bowen, author of "Why the French don't like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space", comments regarding the Muslim woman's dress, "There is a sense that people who are publicly displaying their religious or ethnic characteristics are a slap in the face of French applied political theory."

The presence of the hijab, burqa or the niqab in public life is therefore a continuous reminder of the rejection of liberal values by Muslim women and their strong acceptance and adherence to Islam. The West term this strong attachment to Islamic beliefs and values 'Islamism'. Honest debate has been replaced by draconian policing of Muslims in a desperate attempt to quash any semblance of Islam in the public domain – minaret, hijab and niqab alike. Furthermore, the policy of assimilating Muslims into French society calls for a reshaping of Muslim identity to a French identity.

#### **French identity and citizenship – the road to assimilation**

French nationality law has been based on the principles of 'Jus Soli' (right of nationality by birth) and 'Jus Sanguinis' (right of nationality by blood). However in recent times, more has been expected from Muslim nationals from France which subscribe to the agenda of assimilation. Citizenship is not simply about holding a passport and having citizens rights protected by French law, it is about acceptance of secular liberal values and a

rejection of anything that may contradict it. Article 1 of the French constitution states: *"France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion."*

The French assimilationist agenda links citizenship with the sharing of a set of liberal values. For Muslims in France, this includes the severing of ties between their Muslim brothers and sisters around the world based on French interests and the rejection of Islamic Shariah rules that upset liberal society.

### **Identity and citizenship – is there a difference?**

Defining identity has been a complex discussion in Western societies. One interpretation of identity is associated with multiculturalism where difference is celebrated. The poet Benjamin Zephaniah (who declined acceptance of the OBE) describes this in 'The British':

*"Sprinkle some fresh Indians, Malaysians, Bosnians, Iraqis and Bangladeshis together with some Afghans, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, Japanese And Palestinians. Then add to the melting pot.*

*Leave the ingredients to simmer. As they mix and blend allow their languages to flourish Binding them together with English."*

He views Britishness as a mix of cultures, in contrast to the right wing BNP who call for repatriation of immigrants and regard Britishness as a matter of race – whilst others subscribe to Britishness as a set of values that all citizens must give allegiance and commitment to.

For Muslims living in the West, such a debate can easily be concluding by reference to Islam. Allah (swt) reminds the believer that what defines a Muslim is their belief: *"Say, O you that reject faith! I worship not that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. To you your way and to me mine"* [TMQ Al-Kafiroun: 1-6]

Therefore, what fundamentally defines identity are the beliefs and values one holds that define the way by which

Muslims conduct their affairs. Citizenship and identity are therefore two unique principles that are unrelated. Therefore, it is not a contradiction to have a British passport and live by Islamic values. Being a 'law abiding citizen' is not at the expense of disobedience to Allah (swt).

The European Muslim Identity – Dangers and consequences

Tariq Ramadan in the book 'To be a European Muslim' argues that: *"Muslim identity is not closed, confined within rigid and fixed principles"*. He argues that Muslims in Europe can be bound by two identities. The Muslim identity is described as the identity that answers the 'Why' - in other words the fundamental beliefs and the European/national identity answers the 'How' – in other words how a citizen should live with society. Such a dichotomy therefore propagates a very secular interpretation of identity. According to Ramadan, the European Muslim is one that separates the spiritual from the temporal; one that carries the belief of Islam, but fails to act upon it in all aspects of life. Such a viewpoint promotes the idea of compromise without distinguishing between citizenship and identity.

Some advocates of such an interpretation of identity have also gone as far as defining a new type of fiqh for minority Muslims in Europe, which can even go as far as to recommend women discarding hijab or jilbab!

Muslims faced with a barrage of attacks on their way of life, must therefore be aware of the dangers of justifying compromise of Islamic principles through the use of questionable fatawa – the start of a slippery sloping path away from steadfastness and adherence to Islam. The Prophet (saw) once said that at one time **"holding onto Islam will be like holding onto a burnt ember"**.

### **The Khilafah: Identity and Citizenship**

Islam makes a distinction between identity and citizenship. Citizenship is a contract entered into between the resident of the Khilafah and the Khalifah. Citizenship is not determined by ethnicity, gender, religion or the majority. Rather each individual resident whether Muslim or non-Muslim has the right of protection and

justice according to Islam. In return the State's expectations of its citizens is adherence to the Shariah law - which non-Muslims would regard as the "law of the land" and are required like everyone to respect even if they don't believe in its divine origin.

Muslims who reside outside the domains of the Islamic state are not citizens of the Khilafah. This means the Khalifah is not duty bound to protect or provide justice to those who reside outside the Khilafah. So, what binds Muslims who reside outside the Khilafah with the Islamic state?

Allah (swt) describes the Muslim Ummah as; *"...the best nation brought forth to mankind, you enjoin the good, forbid the evil and believe in Allah"* [TMQ Al-Imran 3:110]

Thus the Muslim identity binds Muslims together regardless of geographical boundaries. Ultimately, that involves sharing the Islamic beliefs and values. This unique bond enables believers to feel the pain and suffering of other believers that surpass geographical boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

The discussions surrounding the banning of the face veil are politically motivated, to add further fuel to the fire. Muslims must not be drawn into a debate on whether the face veil is an obligation or not. Rather the political agenda of assimilation must be exposed. Muslims in the West must also be clear on the difference between holding a passport and adopting secular values. Misunderstanding and tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims can only be quashed through educating the people about Islamic values/beliefs through living Islam in our daily lives. This cannot be achieved by being silent on controversial issues. Disagreement and debate can be healthy and effective in shifting public perceptions.

Moreover, trials and tribulations are a natural consequence of Allah (swt) testing the believers. As Allah (swt) reminds us: *"Never will the Jews and Christians be happy with you until you follow their way (Millatubum)"* [TMQ 2:120]

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International Conference 2010 - Beirut, Lebanon

# Khilafah

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