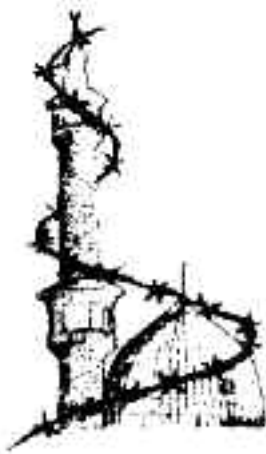


Islamic Human Rights Commission



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In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

THE AIMS OF THE ISLAMIC HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

- To champion the rights and duties revealed for human beings.
- To promote a new social and international order, based on truth, justice, righteousness and generosity, rather than self-interest.
- To demand virtue and oppose wrongdoing in the exercise of power (from whatever base that power derives - e.g. political, judicial, media, economic, military, personal, etc.).
- To gather information about, and to publicise, atrocities, oppression, discrimination, and other abuses of divinely-granted rights.
- To campaign for redress, and to support the victims of such crimes.
- To campaign to bring the perpetrators and their accomplices to justice.
- To cooperate with other groups and individuals where such cooperation is likely to further the achievement of these aims.

The Islamic Human Rights Commission is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations



Turkish humanitarian activists shot on the Mavi Marmara when Israeli special forces attacked an aid convoy in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea, 31 May, 2010.

DYING FOR THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHT TO LIVE



The murderous Israeli attack on the Mavi Marmara on 31 May, 2010, demonstrated to the world what Palestinians and their supporters have always known: that Israel is addicted to the use of military force and utterly ruthless in its willingness to kill anyone who gets in its way. For some time, it seemed that the brazen attack on an unarmed humanitarian convoy in international waters, and the deaths of nine Turkish volun-

teers, would be the tipping point at which the world's indulgence of Israeli brutality would finally break. Gradually the realization has dawned that the attack on the Mavi Marmara has become just another of the long list of Israeli atrocities that the world has managed to ignore. But to say nothing has changed would not be true; increasingly the world is dividing into the great majority who recognize the nature of Zionist racism and the reality of the Palestinian situation, and those

dwindling few who insist of defending Israel no matter what it does. That many of the leaders of western states and international organizations fall into the latter category does not change the fact that Israel is losing the battle for credibility and public opinion, and that as a result, the Palestinians will receive the support they need and deserve sooner or later. The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), for one, has no hesitation in identifying the struggle of the Palestinians

as the symbolic leading edge of the global struggle for justice and against those who believe that might is right, and that the possession of high tech weaponry trumps every call for compassion and mercy. This is why, although the work of the IHRC over the last 13 years has encompassed many different kinds of issues in numerous parts of the world, we make no apology for the fact that the Palestine issue has always

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Muslims in Europe facing a rising tide of Islamophobia

This year has seen the continued rise of Islamophobia in the UK and in Europe, in personal, community and institutional forms. Thus we have seen a rising tide of personal harassment, discrimination and hate crimes against Muslims, and at the state level, continued attacks on civil liberties across Europe, particularly those of Muslims.

The result of these policies has been the increasing isolation and alienation of Muslim communities through polemical rhetoric and reckless security policies that have divided communities, legitimized anti-Muslim paranoia and turned European Muslims into outsiders in their own countries.

In the UK, the greatest civil liberties issue is the use of control orders against "terror suspects" even if they are not accused or charged with criminal activity. Individuals are kept prisoners in their own homes without being told what they are accused of or the evidence on which the accusations are based. The individuals are criminalized without being given the opportunity to go to court and clear their name. The accusations and de facto prison sentences have a devastating effect on the families of the accused. They too are effectively imprisoned alongside their family members, and suffer serious psychological traumas as a result.

Another area in which the IHRC is active concerns the rights of Muslims in prison. A recent report by the Prison Ombudsman details the problems faced by Muslim prisoners. One of the most alarming findings was that most of the training that prison staff receive relating to Muslim prisoners centres on monitoring Muslim prisoners as national security threats, rather than addressing their particular cultural and religious needs and sensitivities. This is despite the fact that fewer than 1 percent of the Muslim prisoner population have been convicted of terrorism or related offences. Muslim prisoners generally report insensitive and heavy handed tactics used by prison staff and an atmosphere of distrust between Muslim prisoners and prison staff.

In Europe, the debate surrounding the dress of Muslim women is becoming increasingly serious. What originally appeared as the extremism of the far right has become an obsession across Europe, supported across the political spectrum. In France, President Nicholas Sarkozy added fuel to the fire when he stated in parliament that the niqab was a "symbol of debasement" and should be outlawed. There followed a nationwide debate, with local government

bodies encouraged to ban the niqab in their provinces. In early July, the French parliament passed a resolution condemning the niqab as "an affront to the nation's values of dignity and equality"; the cabinet has subsequently proposed a bill to ban it, criminalising both the women who wear it, and their male relatives for supposedly forcing them to.

Elsewhere, the Danish Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, was also quoted making inflammatory comments about the niqab. In the Italian city of Novara we saw a woman fined 500 Euros for wearing the niqab in a public place. Niqab bans have been proposed in Belgium, Spain, and Italy and there have been discussions in the UK.

The Swiss, meanwhile, held a referendum on whether to ban the building of minarets in the country. Although the Swiss government opposed the call for a ban, it was strongly supported by rightwing groups and was ultimately successful. This has led to calls to ban the minaret in other parts of Europe including Germany, Italy and Holland.

Such issues both reflect and are fueling a rise in support for rightwing parties across Europe, which are exploiting anti-Muslim sentiments as they traditionally exploited racism, anti-semitism or xenophobic prejudices. Wherever such issues are debated, the anti-Muslim argument has been characterized by inflammatory lies and propaganda, such as that minarets represent missiles pointed at Europe.

In the UK we have seen the rise of the English Defence League (EDL) and the Stop the Islamification of Europe (SIOE). These groups have demonstrated in various city centres and outside numerous mosques. The racism and violence that is espoused by these organisations has created an atmosphere of hostility towards Muslims on the part of many non-Muslims, and fear amongst Muslim communities.

At the same time, we are seeing a rise in the number of physical attacks against Muslims across Europe. One of the most extreme examples of this was the case of Marwa Sherbini, who was stabbed to death in a German court by man she had reported for using Islamophobic insults against her. Although this is at the extreme end, threats, insults and some physical violence is more common everywhere. In the UK there have many reports of assaults including women being spat on and having their niqabs or hijabs pulled off.

Another worrying trend is the number of mosques and Islamic centres being attacked. Again, this is an Europe wide problem. In the

UK, a mosque was burnt to the ground after an arson attack in Cradley Heath, near Birmingham. An Islamic centre in Luton was also burnt down, and a mosque in Greenwich, London, firebombed twice in one week. There were also several other, unsuccessful attempts to destroy mosques. In Istres, near Marseilles in southern France, a mosque was sprayed with bullets in a drive-by shooting. Graffiti, vandalism and threats have become commonplace, and we have even seen worshippers attacked as they leave mosques. One of the more distasteful acts of vandalism has involved pig heads or entrails left inside mosques or thrown through windows.

Even Muslims who have passed away are not safe from the violence. Reports of vandalism at Muslim cemeteries are on the increase, particularly in the UK and France. Most of the incidents involve Islamophobic graffiti or swastikas painted on headstones, and gravestones being pushed over or smashed.

The inescapable reality is that European Muslims are living in a hostile environment. The above examples are just the tip of the iceberg. Yet Muslims are not speaking out against this rise of intolerance. When a Muslim woman has her niqab pulled off on the streets, we are shocked but glad it didn't happen in our area. Every case of a mosque being attacked is regarded as an isolated and extreme incident. When the far-right started proposing the niqab ban, people thought it couldn't actually happen; but now it is happening in several countries, and is even being advocated in the UK by MPs of the ruling Conservative Party.

The time has come for Muslims, and Muslim organizations, to realize that remaining silent is no longer an option. Otherwise, Islamophobic thugs, fascist groups and their fellow-travelers in the media and politics will feel emboldened to attack Islam and Muslims ever more brazenly. If the temptation is to remain passive, for fear of being labeled as provocative or extremist, then remember – there are many more mosques that can be attacked, and our own mosque's turn will come sooner or later. And if we do not support our sisters who choose to wear niqab, then hijab and the Islamic clothing worn by some Muslim men will be the extremists' next targets, in our own countries as well as others.

Islamophobia affects us all, wherever we may be; if we do not act now, we will all fall victim to it.

Abed Choudhury

Leading the campaign against body scanners



One of the major new issues concerning Muslims in the UK over the last year has been the introduction of body scanners at international airports. The government announced on 1 February, 2010, that body scanners would be used at Heathrow and Manchester airports, and expanded to other airports in due course. The announcement was a knee-jerk political reaction to the alleged attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian former student at London University, to detonate a bomb on a flight arriving in the US on the 25 December 2009, even though he no longer lived in Britain and his flight did not originate here.

The problem is that policies introduced in response to media and public hysteria tend to be populist and counter-productive, rather than effective and of minimal inconvenience to citizens. Sensationalist fear-mongering almost inevitably results in previously unimaginable political measures which infringe upon people's civil liberties, particularly of minorities. The case of body scanners is a classic case, in which the UK government's desire to be seen to have an aggressive 'counter-terrorism' strategy has resulted in both the rights to privacy and question of effectiveness being ignored.

The body scanners were already the subject of debate because of concerns that they capture detailed graphic images of the whole human body, in which intimate parts of the person's body are seen by airport staff. The screening is degrading and humiliating especially for those with strong religious beliefs, travelers with medical conditions, women and elderly people. Until the Abdulmutallib incident, opinion was generally against them, not least because experts suggested they would not be particularly effective in deterring or preventing terrorism, as they do not reveal dangerous substances in body cavities, body folds

or hand luggage. The result is that people are being forced to surrender their privacy for a false sense of security.

The UK government has a duty to enact security measures that are compatible with the human rights of all its citizens, as well as effective. The fact that the Code of Practice for the use of the scanners prohibits profiling is not a sufficient safeguard to prevent discriminatory profiling. Evidence of the first few months in which the scanners have been in use confirm the concerns about them and suggest that Muslims are being targeted. There have already been cases in which airport staff have been reprimanded for inappropriate comments and behaviour while using the scanners, and Muslim women have been prevented from flying because they objected to being scanned, even though they were willing to undergo other forms of security checks.

The IHRC believes that the UK government has neglected the privacy concerns when rushing through the implementation of body scanners as a standard security measure. The government does not provide strong safeguards which are compatible with human rights and at the same time effective in providing public security. The IHRC responded to the government's consultation paper and has written an open letter to the Secretary of Transport Philip Hammond outlining its objection against the use of the body scanners and urging the government to change its policy (www.tinyurl.com/ihrc-9378).

The IHRC is also supporting a test case regarding the scanners' breach of privacy rights, being brought by a Muslim woman, through the courts. We hope that this will focus the government's minds on the concerns of Muslims and others, even if other attempts to persuade them to rethink its approach are not successful.

Naba al-Nahi



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Successes against anti-Muslim terror policies

On 13 July 2010, new Home Secretary Theresa May announced an urgent of current anti-terror laws in the UK. This is something that IHRC has been calling for for several years, as it has struggled tirelessly against the rapid erosion of civil liberties in Britain. The review is to consider the most controversial or sensitive counter-terrorism powers including the use of control orders for terror suspects; stop and search powers; the use of counter-terror laws against photographers; the access to communication data by local authorities; the extension of the use of deportations with assurances; measures to deal with organisations that promote hatred or violence; and the 28 day limit for detaining terror suspects without charge.

The review was announced in the wake of a rapidly growing opposition to the suspension of civil liberties among the British public. It appears then that rather than out of any genuine belief in the inherent immorality of penalizing and criminalizing individuals without actually charging and con-

victing them for an offence, the new coalition government is simply now going with the general tide of opposition to such measures.

Indeed, IHRC has been at the heart of the battle to reclaim our civil liberties. IHRC Chair Massoud Shadjareh has presented the concerns of the Muslim community about the disproportionality of stops against minorities through his role as a member of the Home Office Stop and Search Review community panel, involving senior officials from the police and the. IHRC was the only Muslim organisation that gave evidence on the issue of Stop and Search to the Privy Council Review Committee. It also gave evidence on the impact of the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001. IHRC has also submitted detailed responses to the government regarding section 44 of the Terrorism Act, which permits the police to stop and search at will within designated areas, and the introduction of nude body scanners in British airports. The government was finally forced to suspend police powers under section 44 earlier this year after the

European Court of Human Rights ruled them unlawful. IHRC has never been afraid to challenge such abuse of power through the courts and is currently bringing a judicial review of the government's decision to introduce the body scanners.

Such activities alone are not sufficient in addressing the difficulties caused by such discriminatory policies and abusive powers. As part of the 'war on terror', the government was heavily involved in trying to engineer a version of Islam more palatable to Western governments. The programme, labelled 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE), involved deliberately emphasising the divisions within the Muslim community through the funding and promotion of certain Muslim sects and the demonization of others. Moreover, councils, schools and universities were all involved in the surveillance and monitoring of Muslims for supposed signs of extremism. IHRC submitted numerous briefings to the government in response to such programmes. Massoud Shadjareh was also invited to give evidence before a parliamentary enquiry into the programme,

which reached conclusions similar to those recommended by IHRC. Within weeks of coming into power, the new coalition government announced the termination of the PVE programme, due to the negative connotations that had come to be associated with it.

One of IHRC's principle aims is to empower the Muslim community through education and training in issues of human rights and civil liberties. It is the strategy of authoritarian governments to subjugate people by keeping them ignorant; education is a key to liberation. IHRC therefore dedicates a large portion of its time to organising and participating in seminars, workshops and conferences to disseminate its specialist knowledge it has gained through over a decade of experience. The Muslim community is now becoming more aware and more vocal in their protests against the encroachment on their rights. In June 2010, for example, it emerged that counter-terrorism police had installed hundreds of surveillance cameras in Muslim majority areas in Birmingham. As a result of massive public outrage, expressed in overflowing public meetings, the police were forced to apologise and remove the cameras. Such engagement is becoming increasingly common after years of passivity in the face of the deliberately manufactured politics of fear.



In addition to local events throughout the UK, IHRC participated in international seminars in Oslo and Stockholm on the vilification of Muslims in the media as part of the 'war on terror'. IHRC also participated in a two day symposium in Belfast with other human rights activists and former prisoners from the Irish and Muslim communities, comparing experiences of state counter-insurgency policies.

Although the recent announcement that there will be a full review of the government's counter-terrorism laws is a glimmer of hope to build on, IHRC are experienced enough to know that the road to true justice is a long and difficult one. While at times it may seem tiresome, it is only by reminding ourselves of the final destination of those whose footsteps we follow in, that we realise that we have no other choice but to continue.

Fahad Ansari

Muslims still face problem of aggressive policing

As this newsletter goes to print, the Crown Prosecution Service has just announced that PC Simon Harwood, the Metropolitan police officer seen subjecting newspaper vendor Ian Tomlinson (47) to an unprovoked assault during protests against the G20 summit in London in April 2009, will not face charges. This is despite the fact that the attack on Tomlinson was no ordinary police assault. Tomlinson, who was not taking part in the protests, was walking slowly with his hands in his pockets when he was struck from behind and pushed so hard that he fell heavily to the floor. He was also bitten by a police dog before collapsing and dying a few minutes later. He was an ordinary member of the public assaulted by the police who were claiming to represent law and order, and to be protecting the public from the protesters; in fact, it was the protesters who tried, but tragically failed, to protect him from the police.

That the criminal justice system has failed to hold any officer to account for Tomlinson's death, despite incontrovertible video footage of the incident, comes as no surprise to IHRC. For decades now, a culture of impunity has developed within the police service whereby officers behave like violent thugs in full knowledge that they will never be held accountable for their actions. To date, not a single officer has faced any charges for the execution of Jean Charles De Menezes in 2005 or for the brutal sadistic assault on Babar Ahmad in 2003. In Ahmad's case, it took six years of legal proceedings before the Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police admitted last year that his officers had subjected him to a "serious, gratuitous and prolonged attack" that was "tanta-

mount to torture", during the course of which he was forced into the Muslim prostration position of prayer and mocked, "Where is your God now? Why don't you pray to him?"

In all of the above cases, the victims and their families have been compelled to overcome their grief and embark on life-consuming struggles for truth and justice against the state and its various agencies. This has been due to the sheer incompetence and unwillingness of the Independent Police Complaints Commission to hold police officers to account. Throughout their ordeals, they have had to confront lies, intimidation and accusations that they are not telling the truth. These cases, while among the worst instances of police abuse in recent years, are by no means the only such incidents.

The last decade has shown us that the refusal to reprimand or charge officers for their crimes has resulted in such behaviour spreading through the service like an infectious disease, with the result that literally nobody is safe. There is no greater example of this than the heavy-handed policing of the popular demonstrations in support of Palestinians during Israeli attack on Gaza in 2008-09. The shocking level of police violence used against lawful protestors resulted in injury to hundreds of men, women and children.

Again, no disciplinary action has been taken against any officer although two Oxford university graduates who were amongst the victims of police aggression were awarded £25,000 in compensation by the Metropolitan Police. IHRC published a report ('Policing, Protest and Conflict: A Report into the Policing of the London Gaza') in response to the myriad of complaints it received and observed

over the course of the demonstrations. Ironically, many of the injured Muslim protestors were convicted and sentenced to wholly disproportionate prison sentences for public order offences.

It is this skewed implementation of police powers that causes the greatest disharmony and frustration among the Muslim community. Whether it is the discriminatory use of stop and search powers on Muslims, the installation of hundreds of spy cameras in Muslim areas, as recently seen in Birmingham, or the blatant religious profiling under Schedule 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act, whereby Muslims are routinely detained and interrogated for hours at ports of entry and exit, the dual track system of justice is clear for even the most ill-informed observer to realise. It is a sad day for British principles of 'fair play' when the 70-year-old father-in-law and wheelchair bound mother-in-law of Guantanamo detainee Shaker Aamer are detained and interrogated for three hours under Schedule 7. Instead of demanding the release of Aamer after almost nine years imprisonment without charge at Guantanamo, the government is now harassing his elderly in-laws.

In societies where the agents of the state, who are employed to protect the public and its most vulnerable members, not only fail in their duties but become instruments of oppression themselves, trust is shattered, positions polarised, and enmity fostered. History is a witness to the fact that the breakdown in this relationship has been the precursor to the fall and ruin of those states.

Fahad Ansari

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Campaigning for those who cannot help themselves

The work of the IHRC campaigns team takes many forms, and often consists of intensive work by staff and volunteers with little immediate prospect of visible success. Alhamdulillah we have had rewarding outcomes for some of the cases that has further encouraged us to keep up our good work for the oppressed people.

One was the release of Malaysian political prisoner Mat Sah Satray from prison in 2009, after seven years of in jail under the notorious ISA regulations (see box). The IHRC had been campaigning for him as a Prisoner of Faith, as well as raising the issue of the injustices of the ISA regulations in forums such as the UN. After his release, he and his family specifically acknowledged the importance of the IHRC's work. However, he remains under severe restrictions under the terms of a control order, and the IHRC is continuing to support him, as well as campaigning against the ISA more broadly.

Supporting Prisoners of Faith remains a major IHRC campaign, as many Muslims guilty of little more than Islamic activism remain in jails around the world, often in quite appalling conditions. As with the rest of our work, the IHRC campaigns team particularly focuses on cases that have received little attention elsewhere, and on which other civil society organizations in particular are not interested in working. Such prisoners include Jamil al-Amin and Shaikh Omar Abdul Rahman in the US, and Khairat al-Shater, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt who has been in jail for over three years.

Another important success was that of Seyed Mahmoud Mousavi, an American-Iranian who was released from prison on 25 January 2010 after serving two and a half years. The IHRC was able to assist Mousavi's attorney to prepare for appeals that resulted in some of his convictions being over-

turned, and his sentence seriously reduced, by arranging for witnesses from Iran to give evidence in his support.

A continuing IHRC campaign concerns Sarah Melanie Perera, a Muslim convert, who was born in a Buddhist family in Sri Lanka. She was released on bail on 20 April 2010, but still faces

Supporting Prisoners of Faith remains a major IHRC campaign, as many Muslims guilty of little more than Islamic activism remain in jails, often in appalling conditions.

charges. The IHRC has been campaigning to persuade the Sri Lankan authorities to drop the unjustified charges against her.

The campaigns team also organized an effort to block Israel's admission to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). IHRC joined a worldwide campaign against Israel and took a delegation of European Muslim dignitaries campaigning for Turkey to veto Israel's accession to the OECD as well as discussing wider issues concerning the plight of Palestinians, met with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Monday 10 May in Istanbul.

Turkey was alone in opposing Israel

in the OECD, and came under severe pressure from the US not veto Israel, which it ultimately decided not to do. However, it did issue a damning statement voicing the concerns of the Palestinians just before the voting took place at the OECD meeting. The contacts established by the IHRC in Turkey as a result of this campaign are likely to be useful for future cooperation, particularly as Turkey is likely to play a leading role in opposing Israel's policies against the Palestinians in view of the Mavi Marmara episode.

The IHRC has also been studying the plight of the Roma of Bulgaria, most of whom are Muslim, and campaigning for their rights. A major report on the subject was published in 2009. The campaigns team has particularly been involved in helping the Atahacoba family, has suffered severely as a result of the deeply ingrained racist and anti-Islamic attitudes of the Bulgarian political and social system.

In 2008, the family house where they had lived for almost 25 years was demolished by the city council. The police forcibly evicted the 16-member family, leaving them on the street; a nine-month-old baby died of shock in the severe cold that day. Since then the family has been denied justice by the Bulgarian courts. With the collaboration of Advice on Individual Rights in Europe Centre (AIRE) and IHRC, the case was taken to European Courts of Human Rights on 11 June 2010.

Campaigns remain a major part of the IHRC's work, but is largely dependent on the support of members of the community who appreciate our work and are willing to contribute to it. This support can take many forms, according to the supporters interests and the commitment they can afford to make.

Anyone interested in joining us in this effort may contact us on info@ihrc.org or by telephoning 0207 904 4222.

Mat Sah bin Mohammed Satray

Mat Sah Satray was released from prison in September 2009 after seven years of imprisonment. He was held under the notorious ISA (Internal Security Act) law, by which people can be held indefinitely. He was charged and convicted of being a part of the militant group Jemeeh Islamiyah (JI) without any evidence to substantiate the charge. His wife, Nor Laila Othman struggled throughout the years of his sentencing with the traumatic memories of his initial arrest, cruel treatment in prison and raising her teenage son as a single mother; however despite the difficult circumstances she became a committed campaigner calling for the abolishment of ISA.

The IHRC produced a prisoner of faith pack detailing the case, including templates of letters lobbying the Malaysian government and international bodies such as the UN, calling for the abolishment of the ISA and fair trials for those held under the ISA law. These template letters were utilised by the Abolish ISA movement in Malaysia to lobby for the release of Mat Sah and other victims of the ISA law. 40,000 letters were sent to the Malaysian home minister, 100,000 letters were sent to the UN and tens of thousands of letters expressing support and solidarity were received by the family of Mat Sah.

In a very moving interview with the IHRC earlier this year (www.tinyurl.com/ihrc-9090), Nor Laila Othman stated that the IHRC campaign pack triggered the avalanche of support for Mat Sah and led to large demonstrations against the use of ISA. As a result of the demonstrations, the Malaysian government took notice and campaigners believe this pressure led to the release of Mat Sah Satray and other ISA detainees.



Seyed M. Mousavi

A California resident and American-Iranian dual national, was sentenced in April 2008 for after being convicted of an alleged violation of the US/Iran trade embargo, failing to report income, and lying on his naturalisation application. In December 2008, he was transferred to one of the US's notorious Communication Management Units (CMU), in Indiana.

Frequently nicknamed 'Muslim-only prisons', CMUs are designed to house terror suspects, and have been severely criticised by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for their conditions and restrictions. Mousavi's transfer to one raised serious questions as there were no terrorist element to his case.

Mousavi served a total of 2 and a half years before being released from prison on 25 January 2010. On 5 May 2010, an appeals court overturned the previous circuit court conviction for immigration charges. The IHRC assisted his then attorney, Ronald Keyes, with the appeals by arranging for supporting witnesses to provide key testimonies from Iran.

Mousavi's case indicates the problems that Muslims face from politically sensitive charges in the US judicial system, even when there is no question of extremism or connections with terrorism. This is an area of particular concern to the IHRC. While Seyed Mousavi is now a free man and continues to be an US citizen, he calls on campaigners to continue their prayers and support while he appeals other charges.



Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman

Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, leader of the Gama'a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group) in Egypt in the 1980s, was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in the US in 1995, following investigations into the 1993 bombings of the World Trade Centre which showed that the bombers had attended his mosque. He was convicted of sedition under legislation not used since the American civil war in the mid-19th century, on the basis of conversations taped by an FBI informant, even though legal observers agreed that he had said nothing to justify the charges against him.

The sheikh is both blind and severely ill with diabetes, has been detained in a solitary confinement for 15 years. His health is deteriorating and he is being denied the right to family visitations. It is a sign of the US determination to maximise his suffering that his former lawyer, Lynne Stewart, who is 70 years-old, was convicted of smuggling messages from him to his followers after releasing a statement from him to the Reuters news agency. She was initially sentenced to 28 months in jail; this was increased to 10 years July 2010 after the government appealed against the original sentence.

IHRC has long been campaigning for improvement of his conditions in prison, and for his family to be granted US visas so they can visit him. Ideally, he would like to be transferred to prison in Egypt. However, given the level of US demonization of him, this appears unlikely ever to be granted.



Sarah Melanie Perera

A Muslim convert, who was born in a Buddhist family in Sri Lanka and has been living in Bahrain for many years, Sarah Melanie Perera was arrested last year, when leaving Sri Lanka after a three months holiday. The charges: allegedly offending Buddha and the Buddhist religion. The police forcibly removed Perera's headscarf and made a video which was played on all Sri Lankan television channels. Perera was released on bail on 20 April, 2010, but is still banned from leaving the country.

Her lawyer, Lakshan Dias, has argued that the charges against her are baseless, and brought evidence from experts on Buddhism to testify that there was no sign of insult for Buddha or Buddhism in Perera's books. He has also argued that she did not attempt to disturb peace in the country, as required under the Emergency law under which she was arrested.

IHRC has raised attention to the case, and called on the Sri Lankan authorities to immediately lift the travel ban and end the use of Emergency laws against Perera. It also calls on the Sri Lankan authorities to investigate and discipline the police responsible for removing Perera's headscarf in violation of her freedom of religion and practice.

Eritrean Refugees in Libya

Since 2007, the IHRC has been working on the case of hundreds of Eritrean Refugees in Libya, who fled their country in fear of the oppression there. They are currently being detained at detention facilities, under threat of deportation back to Eritrea. Some have died as a result of treatment in Libya, and others have already been deported.

The IHRC, and other human rights organizations have appealed against these decisions and demanded that the Libyan government respect the rights of these refugees under the international covenants that it has ratified. These include the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which provides that Libya may not return any person to a place where they face torture or ill-treatment.

In January 2010 the Libyan government allowed Eritrean officials to enter the detention centres to collect information about refugees there and take some with them. Despite all the work of IHRC and other human rights organizations, the ill-treatment, abuse and deportation of Eritreans by the Libyan government still continue.

Introducing the new IHRC bookshop, gallery and information hub

IHRC is pleased to announce that it will *insha'Allah* be opening a new facility in London in October 2010: a bookshop, gallery and information hub. Designed to offer a friendly service to those interested in Islam and human rights, it aims to stock a wide variety of books: non-fiction, fiction, textbooks, academic and popular works on these themes. The store will provide a reading area and sell tea and coffee for those wishing to spend some time looking through stock, or making use of the information hub. As part of IHRC, there will always be someone on hand to answer questions about relevant topics, be it from a theological, legal or other perspective.

The small gallery space offers an opportunity for up and coming artists to exhibit their work, as well as for IHRC to put on themed exhibitions, whether to promote arts and crafts from areas around the world, IHRC has worked on, on issues of concern to IHRC to promote artists whose works promote the universal struggle for justice.

For those unable to access the store in person, an on-line facility selling all our stock will *insha'Allah* follow. As well as providing a new service and experience, we hope that the shop will also help IHRC generate another stream of income to help support its ever expanding workload.

We hope that if you are able to you will come and join us at the new venue. We will be holding small events on the premises that will be broadcast on the internet. From lit-



erary workshops, to interviews and audiences with renowned activists, former prisoners of faith, and so on, we hope that we will be able to keep raising awareness of the important issues that face us all. Please join us and help us in whatever way you can, by donating towards the premises, giving ideas for or donating new or second hand books and appropriate media, watching or attending our events or by sending your messages of support.

● "Scourge of demagogues from George Bush to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, critic of state terrorism in Sudan, Zimbabwe, and occupied Palestine, the IHRC has been defending the rights of the oppressed since 1997. The IHRC marries the best of human rights discourse to some of the most liberating interpretations of Islam to produce a powerful cultural and political challenge to an unjust order."

Robin Yassin-Kassab,
Author of 'The Road from Damascus'

● "We are living in times that demand the utmost tolerance mutual respect and consideration of the rights and freedoms of others as well as ourselves. The establishment of this service is much needed and welcomed by all those who support human rights and freedom under the law. We cannot allow ignorance, prejudice and intolerance to be the excuse for inhumanity. This multicultural UK needs organisations like the IHRC to defend rights and support the vulnerable. I wish IHRC the best in its endeavours and congratulate its leadership and supporters on their achievements to date."

Lord Victor Adebawale

● "I pray to Almighty G-d to make this latest venture of IHRC as successful as its other

work in the promotion of justice and truth for all peoples and against all oppression and injustice."

Rabbi Ahron Cohen,
Neturei Karta UK

● "We therefore feel that this new location is perfectly situated due to its diverse neighborhood. This will certainly provide an opportunity for such a gifted organization to provide and accomplish all its lofty goals."

"This unique location will especially be an opportunity to build bridges and mend rifts amongst our multicultural society that suffers from so much division in these troubled times."

Neturei Karta, USA

"May the Almighty grant you success and blessings in your exemplary work. May He bring the ultimate relief with the revelation of His glory throughout the world which will unite the universe in harmonic coexistence in His joyful service. Amen."

Neturei Karta, USA

● "I cannot overstate the importance of having such informative materials so readily available to the general public at a time when Islamophobia is so disturbingly on the rise. Anyone familiar with the IHRC's website, events & activities will realize at once what valuable resources these are for our

times. I only wish we could replicate such places across the cities and towns of the United States and elsewhere outside the Islamic world where knowledge, understanding and cross-cultural communication are in such great need."

Jennifer Loewenstein,
Associate Director of the Middle East Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison

● "The new IHRC bookshop, gallery and information centre will provide a valuable and timely resource for everyone who is committed to freedom and justice for all."

Iqbal Bhana,
OBE DL

● "The IHRC store bringing together books, both non-fiction and fiction, new and second-hand, on human rights, and on Islam, is an important step in filling the void for many young people who look in bookshops and libraries for books on these subjects, and usually don't find the good ones. The store will be a magnet for students and, with a wide range of pamphlets also available, will be an excellent and welcome educational resource for many of us."

Victoria Brittain,
writer and journalist



IHRC Merchandise & Campaign Material

❑ **Malcolm X T-Shirt, unisex, long sleeve**
Slogan: Truth is always on the side of the oppressed. Designed exclusively for IHRC. Colour: black. Sizes M, L, XL and XXL. £10 incl p&p



❑ **Police, Protest and Conflict: A Report into the Policing of the Gaza Demonstrations 2008-09.** This report is an examination of how the police in Britain dealt with protests against Israel's war in Gaza. 96pp. £7.

❑ **Europe's Shame: Anti-Muslim Hatred and the Roma of Bulgaria** Based on the report submitted to UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (see p. 6 above). Pub: July 2009. £7.

❑ **Aftermath: Gaza in the Days After the 22 Day War.** (May 2009) A diary account of two lawyers who visited Gaza to col-



The Ka'bah, Makkah 1, ❑ Large ❑ Small



Medina Sunset 1
❑ Large ❑ Small



Dome of the Rock ❑ Large ❑ Small



Masjid Al-Aqsa and Dome of the Rock

Canvas Prints, various scenes by and © Muhsin Kilby. Muhsin Kilby is a London based photographer who has travelled and photographed many parts of the world. His travels have taken him throughout Africa, as well as to the USA, Canada, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and western Europe. He has also written on various issues including Jerusalem and Palestine. **Prints available in two sizes:** 16" x 20" (approx) £95 and 30" x 40" (approx) £189; hand stretched onto 34mm bars and sealed with varnish for extra protection. **Original lightfast UV ink** to keep the print looking vivid. **More scenes also available,** including Water Fountain in Istanbul; Al-Mohad door, Seville, Andalucia; Interiors of Masjid Al-Aqsa and Dome of the Rock; and more images of the Ka'ba. Total 28 scenes. See IHRC website for details: www.ihrc.org/catalog.

lect testimony from victims of the brutal Israeli war. £6.

❑ **Strong white IHRC cap,** with green embroidered logo and slogan: **Join the Struggle for Justice, Join IHRC.** (See image p. 15.) £6.

❑ Long sleeve T-Shirt with the wording 'Whose Side Are You On' (front), 'The World Stopped Nazism, The World Stopped Apartheid, The World Must Stop Zionism' (reverse). S, M, L & XL. £10.

See page 15 or the IHRC website for more publications and merchandise... and special Ramadan offers
www.ihrc.org/catalog

❑ **Eid Cards, Quran Set 1**
6 Beautiful calligraphic cards* (A6 size) with envelopes. The original IHRC Eid cards. £4

❑ **Eid Cards, Quran Set 2**
6 Beautiful calligraphic cards* (A6 size) with envelopes. The original IHRC Eid cards. £4

❑ **Eid Cards, Art and Architecture Set.** 6 A6 cards* with various scenes from

Palestine to Spain, with envelopes. £4.

IHRC BADGES

❑ Pack of 10 small button badges with IHRC logo. £3.00.

UMBRELLA

❑ Large black umbrella with IHRC logo in white and the slogan 'Join the Struggle for Justice Join IHRC. £10.



Genocide Memorial Day: remembering the victims of history

On Sunday 17th January, 2010, the Islamic Human Rights Commission commemorated the first anniversary of the end of the Israeli attack on Gaza in with a special event entitled 'Genocide Memorial Day'. A year on from brutal Israeli assault, the event looked at the historical aspect of genocide and addressed man's inhumanity against man.

This event was not only organised to look at the massacre in Gaza, but to remember genocide, genocidal acts and its victims across history and the genocide that is still taking place in a post-modern and globalised world today. It analysed the near eradication of indigenous peoples across the Americas, through slavery, the Nazi Holocaust, the Philippines, Indochina, Palestine, Bosnia, Rwanda, Hiroshima, Nagasaki and India, amongst others. It is hoped that GMD will become an annual event dedicated to remembering all victims of genocide.

Speakers at the event, which took place at the Islamic Centre, England, included Randeep Ramesh, Lee Jasper, Rabbi Ahron

Cohen, Sameh Habib, and Imam Achmad Cassiem, with written statements from Ward Churchill and Hasan Nuhanovic and a special contribution from a Holocaust survivor, Rabbi Beck.

Randeep Ramesh, a South Asia correspondent for the Guardian, spoke of the need to recognize the Indian Holocaust which claimed 10 million lives in the 1857 rebellion. Lee Jasper, a human rights activist, gave a detailed, emotional account of the slave trade as well as discussed issues of racism and economic gain as providing the impetus for genocide.

Rabbi Cohen, of Neturei Karta, and Rabbi Beck highlighted the significance of the Holocaust, and spoke of the need to recognize that religion is about truth while politics focuses on compromise. For religious people, truth should not be compromised. He therefore felt it necessary to talk about the plight of the Palestinian people. The occupation of Palestine has done great moral and spiritual damage to the Jewish people, he said.

Sameh Habib, a freelance journalist from Gaza, spoke about water and food restrictions as a

result of the siege and children who were born deformed as a result of depleted uranium used by the Israelis, and argued that these constituted genocidal acts.

Yvonne Ridley read a statement by Professor Ward Churchill (academic and human rights activist) on the Indigenous American genocide and Samir Abdalla read a statement from Hasan Nuhanovic (Campaigner and UN translator) from Bosnia who discussed his horrifying experiences where he lost family members in the Srebrenica massacre.

Imam Cassiem of South Africa, a former prisoner on Robben Island, gave a powerful presentation on the concept of genocide and the psychological, socio-political and economic framework that underpins those involved in genocidal acts, with a specific emphasis on prevention.

The program was also supported by other organizations, including the Muslim Association of Britain, Neturei Karta, Jews Against Zionism, Stop the War Coalition, CAMPACC, British Muslim Initiative, Palestinian Return Centre, Ahlul Bayt Islamic



The Genocide Memorial Day events in London on 17 January, 2010. It is proposed that GMD be marked around the world each year from now on, in cooperation with UJN and other organizations.

Mission, Innovative Minds, Ahlul Bayt Societies and Islamic Forum Europe.

To promote Genocide Memorial Day, and to raise awareness of the issues it commemorates, the IHRC also announced the publication of a GMD calendar, downloadable from the IHRC website, and a series of monthly essays. Essays published include ones on the Philippines, Congo,

Srebrenica, the Warsaw Ghetto, Native Americans and Cambodia. More essays will be produced in future; there are unfortunately plenty of incidents of genocide to write about.

It is hoped that GMD will become a day marked annually around the world, *insha' Allah*.

Meherun Nessa Khanom

To download your free copies of the GMD Calendar, and copies of the GMD Memorial Essays, or for other information, go to:

www.tinyurl.com/ihrc-gmd

ANNUAL
AL-QUDS DAY 2010
MARCH FOR JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE
Saturday 4th September, London, UK
Assemble at 2pm at Marble Arch

Please call 020 8904 4222 for details of coaches from other cities or email info@ihrc.org

Confronting zionists and fascists on Al-Quds Day

Last year's Al Quds Day Demonstration in London, on Sunday 13th September, 2009, attracted one of the largest attendance ever, thanks no doubt to the escalation of the Palestine conflict after the Israeli assault on Gaza in 2008-09. It was also given a late boost by the media coverage attracted by the decision of the Greater London Authority (GLA) to revoke permission for the demonstration to end at Trafalgar Square, as it has been doing for the last 27 years, apparently in response to the threats of counter demonstrations from right wing groups such as the BNP and March for England, who have become the Zionists latest allies.

In the event, the counter-demonstrations were largely ineffective, as they were massively outnumbered by the numbers of protesters, mainly Muslim, who poured in from all over the country, despite the pressures of Ramadan. Over 3,000 people turned up, slogans were chanted, and Londoners and watching tourists were left in no doubt as to the opinions of Muslims and others regarding Israel and its crimes against Palestinians. The event was also, as usual, a vibrant demonstration of the energy, diversity and unity of the Ummah. Sisters and Brothers from all over the world marched in unison and harmony, and the presence of people from all walks of life, the youth, the

young and the old, families, children, Sunnis and Shias, and even a good number of Jews and Christians, black and white, showed the solidarity of people in support of Palestinians.

The last Friday of Ramadan was proclaimed as Yawm Al Quds (Jerusalem Day) Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, and people around the world have marked the day every year ever since, often on the following Sunday in western countries such as UK. It is a demonstration in support of not only Palestinians but the oppressed people all over the world. The IHRC plays a central role in organizing the London event, with the support of a large number of other charity organizations and activist groups. Supporters this year included the Ahlulbayt Islamic Mission (AIM), Stop the War Coalition, CAMPACC, Neturei Karta, Muslim Association of Britain, Muslim Council of Britain, FOSIS, Islamic Centre of England, Friends of Al Aqsa, Friends of Lebanon, Palestine Return Centre, Respect Party, Islamic Student Association UK, British Muslim Initiative, Innovative Minds and the Jews Against Zionism.

Guest speakers included Roland Rance, Sheikh Mohammed Saeed Bahmanpour, Dr. Daud Abdullah, Yvonne Ridley, Taji Mustafa, Rabbi Ahron Cohen, John Rees with a speech read by Simran Khan and a poem read by Saqib Rizvi. Nasheed artist Mujahid al Haq and his group sang a medley of nasheeds on Palestine.

The opposition from Zionists groups and their allies is nothing new, although their alliance with fascist groups like the English Defence League (EDL) is revealing. All the groups have in common is a hatred for Islam and Muslims, reflected in slogans such as 'We hate Muslims' and 'Muslim bombers off our street.' A similar alliance had been witnessed at demonstrations organized by the Stop the Islamisation of Europe group outside the Harrow Central Mosque two days earlier, on the anniversary of the 911 attacks. This itself followed earlier confrontations in London, Luton, Birmingham and elsewhere. However, the large number of Metropolitan Police present prevented any physical confrontation taking place.

Despite the obstacles and problems in the lead up to the event, it generated considerable support for the Palestinians in the streets of London, and media coverage which was noted even in Palestine itself. A great thank you to all those who attended and participated in the march for a worthy cause and who played a role in making the event successful; and *insha' Allah*, we look forward to seeing even more people there this year, on 4 September (see ad for details).

Meherun Nessa Khanom

Representing Islamic civil society groups at the UN



Maryam H'madoun, Arzu Merali and Dr. Abdallah Thomas Milcent addressing the IHRC's side panel on Women and Hijab in Europe, March 2010.

One of the things that distinguishes the IHRC from most other Muslim civil society organisations is its long history of work at the UN. Very soon after the IHRC's establishment in 1998, we realised firstly that it was necessary to be able to operate at many different levels simultaneously, and secondly, that many of the issues we were raising were issues that have transnational, even global, dimensions and could not be effectively addressed by groups operating only at local levels.

The IHRC was accredited with the UN Department of Political Affairs in 2002, and achieved Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN in 2007. In both capacities it now contributes written and oral statements to the proceedings of various UN bodies, aiming to ensure that issues are raised that many would prefer not to see raised. In particular, we aim to ensure that delegates and officials are informed on human rights issues and violations, with particular focus on the mistreatment and violations of the rights of Muslims in both Muslim and non-Muslim states.

IHRC delegates now attend all sessions of the UN Human Rights Commission, organizing side panels in order to highlight issues little know even in the human rights community. In March this year, for example, we organised a side panel on 'Women and Hijab in Europe', with Dr. Abdallah Thomas Milcent of the March 15 Liberation Committee in France, and Maryam H'madoun from BOEH! in Belgium. Arzu Merali from IHRC also took part.

The panel was attended by a sizeable contingent from France attended, including representatives from UNICEF, as well as the Head of the French delegation in Geneva. The panellists presented the experiences of Muslim women denied the right to go to school or work because they wore hijab. Needless to say the French head of mission responded vigorously. Incredibly this was one of the first times that a French government official had engaged directly with any group advocating the rights of Muslim women, as Dr. Milcent pointed out. It is precisely this sort of contribution that IHRC makes. The audio of this panel is already available on-line and a transcript will follow later this year.

Another major part of the IHRC's work at the UN is preparing reports for the Universal Periodic Reviews of countries' human rights records which take place for each country every four years. In these too, we aim to highlight issues of particular interest to Muslim communities and populations, which are not likely to be noted by non-Muslim groups and therefore not likely to be otherwise covered by the UN. In the last year, we have contributed UPR reports focusing on China, Iraq and Egypt.

We have also contributed to other UN and UNHRC proceedings discussing issues in various other countries, including the threats to the Shi'a community in Saudi Arabia; the abuses of human rights as a result of the ISA regulations in Malaysia; the follow-up to the Durban Review Conference on racism; the treatment of prisoners in US camps in Afghanistan; the restrictions on hijab in Turkey; and the rising anti-Islamic polemic in

Germany and other European countries, among many others. (Details of our UN work are available on the IHRC website.)

There is of course no doubt that the UN is, as many people point out, a forum dominated by powers hostile to Islam. However, our experience there over the years shows that even in the UN, it is possible to meet and establish contact many people who are open to voices offering different perspectives to their own and learning from them.

In recent years, this has been most graphically demonstrated over two issues: first, the Durban Conference against racism in South Africa in 2001, where the IHRC played a leading role in ensuring that Muslim concerns about Zionism and Islamophobia were heard, and its subsequent follow-up, leading to the Durban Review Conference in Geneva last year; and second, the growing awareness at the UN, despite the dominance of the US and other western states, that Israel's policies against the Palestinians are both inhumane and illegal, an awareness that owes more to the actions of UN agencies and NGOs than any governments, even Arab and Muslim ones.

Of course, the UN cannot be the only forum through which the IHRC pursues its concerns at a worldwide level, which is why it has also played a leading role in the establishment of the Universal Justice Network as a coordinating body for Muslim civil society groups worldwide (see p. 11); but we firmly believe that this is important work that we cannot afford to neglect.

Arzu Merali

Developing the IHRC's web presence: www.ihrc.org



Information is the key part of the IHRC's work: gathering information from various sources, storing and organizing information, analysing information to derive conclusions from it, and – perhaps above all – distributing and propagating information to various audiences in order to promote the IHRC's aims and objectives.

It is largely thanks to technology that the modern age is sometimes characterised as the age of information, with the internet now the key medium. It is through the internet that the media plays an important role in manipulating the global opinion; and for an organization that needs to keep up to date with the rapid news developments all over the world, and to respond to them, the internet is of immense importance.

The IHRC has had a website that has played a major role in its work for many years, which had grown haphazardly as the IHRC's work expanded in unforeseen directions. Although it amply demonstrated its importance and potential in highlighting the IHRC's work on the World Wide Web, and raising the voices of the oppressed across the world, this original website eventually came to be creaking under the strain. In recent years there have also been great technological advances in the internet and in web structure and design, particularly in terms of the potential for multimedia.

Last year, therefore, it was decided that the IHRC should commission the design of a new website. The priorities were multifold: the new site

should be better organised in order to reflect the range and complexity of the IHRC's work; maximise the potential for the use of our multimedia resources, particularly audio and video; be much easier to navigate, and so provide a more satisfying experience for users, whatever their interest may be; and have the potential for future growth, in terms of both the work of the IHRC and advances in web technologies.

The new website was launched in August 2009, although it remains in constant state of redevelopment, one of the key capacities for modern websites. It has proved a considerable success alhamdulillah. In now consists of four main sections – News, Publications, Activities and Events – with each section divided into a number of further subcategories. Within Activities, therefore, for example, there are sections on campaigns, the IHRC's UN work, and other projects. By using the search function, it is possible to bring together material on particular issues or areas of the IHRC's work.

The vast reservoir of older materials held by the IHRC, as documents, images, and audio or video recordings, are being added to the site at the moment. In future, the IHRC hopes to develop its web site into an open source for all human rights campaigners and activists.

The site remains, however, a permanent work in progress, and for this part of our work, as for all others, we need the support and feedback from our supporters.

Hussain Araki

**HAVE YOU BEEN A VICTIM OF ISLAMOPHOBIA?
HAVE YOU BEEN ABUSED, DISCRIMINATED
AGAINST, VILIFIED OR EVEN ATTACKED
BECAUSE YOU ARE MUSLIM?**

Report it in confidence through IHRC's on-line reporting form at:

www.ihrc.org.uk/incidents

It is important to report these incidents, even if you do not want your identity to be known and you don't want any further action taken. So long as a record is made, we can build up a true picture of the type of hostility that Muslims face today.

THIS SERVICE IS ENTIRELY CONFIDENTIAL.

The plight of Muslim Roma in Bulgaria

You killers don't come near me... go to hell all of you..." the strident curses of Nefize echoed among the poverty stricken houses of Trosheva, when I visited them on November 11, 2009. Nefize, the grandmother of Atahacoba family, thought that I was a Bulgarian; she was angry and hostile towards me and my local guide until it was explained that I was there to help.

The Atahacoba family, Muslim Romas, have been victims of the deeply ingrained racism and anti-Islamic attitudes of the Bulgarian political and social system. In 2008, the family house where they had lived for almost 25 years was demolished by the city council, despite an ongoing court hearing to stop the demolition.

The 16-members of the family were evicted by police and dumped them on the street. A nine-month-old baby died of shock of the severe cold that day. When the case was taken to court, the council was acquitted on the grounds that Ridvan Saly, head of a local NGO, was not entitled to represent them. Saly told me that he was not surprised. "These kinds of discriminatory and unjust decisions are not uncommon in the Bulgarian legal system," he said. "I had all the proper documents to represent the family in court."

Now the family is struggling to survive in a tiny shack, without a toilet, bathroom, or running water. When she had calmed down, Nefize told me that the children had had to bathe in the sea and had nothing to eat. When we gave them food and blankets on behalf of IHRC she said "I knew this; I have been asking Allah to help us and He did. He never leaves my



Roma children living and playing in squalor in Trosheva, Bulgaria. The IHRC is supporting a case regarding Roma rights brought in the European Court of Human Right in June 2010.

prayers unanswered."

When I first visited Kosovo, a suburb of Varna populated overwhelmingly by Roma Muslims, in January 2008, I had to walk down a muddy and filthy road to get there. The local houses were just flimsy shacks. The lack of hygiene was a major problem in the area. The children played in the rubbish,

infant mortality was high and there was a high rate of cancer among adults.

The root cause of this terrible situation was made clear to me when I visited the council and met Ivan Tsankov, 'Chief Expert in Ethnic and Demographic Affairs'. I asked him why the Roma were living in such conditions. He replied

with a question, "Is it not normal for Roma to live in a dump?" This racist attitude was evident throughout our conversation.

In 2001, the declaration of the UN's Durban Conference against racism stated that when racism is combined with "sex, language, religion... victims can suffer multiple or aggravated forms of dis-

crimination." In Bulgaria, Christian Roma are clearly better off than Muslim Roma, with better housing, better living conditions, better job prospects and indeed better reputation, evidently because of they share the same religion with other Bulgarians.

Meanwhile, feelings of isolation have led Muslim Roma to seek new associations or revive past memories: the influence of Turkish popular culture was impossible to ignore among them. Despite their poverty, Muslim Roma make sure they have satellite dishes so they can watch Turkish TV. Their language too is similar to Turkish. This sense of connection with an "imagined community," as Benedict Anderson called it, gives them a sense of belonging despite their physical isolation.

Meanwhile, some Roma have a different response to the problems they face as Muslims in Bulgaria: conversion to Christianity, thanks to the significant activity of US missionaries. However former Muslims explained to me that their condition was only slightly improved by their conversion; overall they were still treated negatively.

On 11 December, the Acotohaba family lost an appeal against the decision of the local court. With the collaboration of Advice on Individual Rights in Europe (AIRE Centre) and IHRC the case was taken to European Courts of Human Rights on 11 June 2010.

(The IHRC's report on Anti-Muslim Hatred and the Roma of Bulgaria is available for purchase from the IHRC website.)

Seyfeddin Kara

Extract from executive summary of IHRC report on the Roma

Bulgaria has made substantial, and largely consensual, progress towards implementing and maintaining democratic processes and institutions. However, laws protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities have often been implemented as a result of pressure, or fear of pressure from Bulgaria's international counterparts, like the United States and Europe.

However, there is still noticeable racism and discrimination against the Muslim minorities of Bulgaria that is mostly rooted in the memories of Ottoman rule. After a long and bloody independence war, founders of the Bulgarian "nation state" felt that there was a pressing need for the redefinition of the territorial and ethnographic perimeters. During the process, everything related to the Ottomans, or anything reminiscent of their rule, was encountered severely, considered as remnants of a foreign rule that the Bulgarian nation needed to remove. Islam was to be regarded as a strong reminder of the Ottoman rule, while Muslims became the "others", to be either expunged or exiled.

There are three significant Muslim minorities in Bulgaria: Turks, Pomaks, and Muslim Gypsies or Roma. In addition, there exist pockets of Albanians, Tatars and Circassians who have assimilated into the Turkish Community. After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, around one million Turks and other Muslims emigrated from Bulgaria. This emigration flow continued during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the periods of the First and the Second World Wars. Those who had chosen to stay in the country centred their identities around Islam.

Currently the number of the Muslim minorities residing in Bulgaria is significant. Bulgaria currently has the largest proportion of Muslims among all the EU member

countries. According to the last two population censuses from 1992 and 2001, the total number of Muslims (based on "religious belonging") is 1,110,295 (out of 8,887,317 total population) in 1992, and 966,978 (out of 7,928,901) in 2001. Turks, with 800,052 persons in 1992, and 746,664 in 2001, are the largest Muslim group in Bulgaria.

The education level amongst the Muslim minority in Bulgaria is very low. According to figures, only 2.7 per cent of the Turkish population have university education. Further, 5.6 per cent of Turks and Pomaks do not have a primary education. The low education rates have a great impact on the labour market. Lack of education puts the Turks and Muslim Bulgarians at a disadvantage, which in turn creates certain inequities in the labour market and inevitably leads to high levels of unemployment.

Unemployment in the Muslim populated areas is 3-4 times higher than the average national unemployment rate of 16 per cent. The estimated unemployment rate among the Turks and Pomaks is around 40 per cent and among the Roma is 80 per cent.

In comparison to other minorities Roma are the least favoured minority group in Bulgaria, with around 70 per cent of the population considering them unfavourably (31.8 per cent mostly unfavourable and 39.3 per cent very unfavourable). Surveys indicate that the Bulgarian majority perception of Muslim minorities in general is significantly more unfavourable than towards Armenians and Jews.

Shocking reports of a survey revealed that 89 per cent of Bulgarian high school and university students believed that Roma were robbers, 87 per cent considered them to be dirty and ignorant, 83% careless, 80% having bad manners, 76% being trouble makers, 70% having lice, 68% lazy, 64%

EUROPE'S SHAME:

Anti-Muslim Hatred and the Roma of Bulgaria

Seyfeddin Kara



Human Rights Commission
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 WASHINGTON, DC 20002
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with musical talents.

There is an issue of double discrimination for ethnic minorities that have additional 'disadvantages'. In the case of Muslim Roma their religious conviction and the current anti-Islamic climate indeed single them out to be in the category of facing double discrimination.

For more information, see www.tinyurl.com/ihrc-7905.

IHRC takes delegation of European Muslims to lobby Turkey over Israel

A delegation of European Muslim community leaders and activists, organised and led by IHRC, visited Turkey from 9-15 May. The main object of the visit was to meet government officials, opposition politicians and NGOs in order to persuade the Turkish government to veto Israel's admission to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The visit was the culmination of a long campaign by the IHRC, which resulted in thousands of letters from around the world being sent to the Turkish Prime Minister.

The delegation consisted of: Massoud Shadjareh, Chairman of the IHRC, UK; Majed al-Zeer, General Director of the Palestinian Return Centre, UK; Said Ferjani, Head of Policy, Media & PR, Muslim Association of Britain; Dr. Daud Abdullah, Director of Middle East Monitor, UK; Dr. Abdallah Thomas Milcent, March 15 Committee, France; Dr. Arafat Shoukri, Chair of the European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza, UK; and Seyfeddin Kara, Head of Campaigns, IHRC, UK.

It argued that, due to its egregious human rights violations against Palestinians, disregard for the core principles of the international law, and belligerent attitude, the Israeli regime should not be allowed to join the OECD. Israel is also far below the economic criteria that is set by the OECD for admission of a candidate country, and had offered suspect statistics to the OECD.

On 10 May, the delegation met Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul, which was the administrative centre of the Ottoman khilafah from 1856-1889 and 1909-1922. The meeting was also attended by senior officials, diplomats and foreign ministry staff, including Fuat Tanlay, Chief Advisor to the PM and a Senior Ambassador; Nabi Avcı, Chief Adviser to the PM, Yıldırım Ramazanoğlu, Chief Advisor to the PM, and Sinan Ertay and Furkan Torlak, repre-



Members of the IHRC delegation meeting Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Istanbul, 10 May, 2010. Left to right: Dr Abdallah Thomas Milcent, Massoud Shadjareh, prime minister Erdogan, Majed al-Zeer, Said Ferjani and Dr Daud Abdullah. Right: Dr Abdullah greeting the prime minister.

sentatives of the foreign ministry.

Erdogan thanked the delegation for its work, and said that he agreed with the aim of the campaign. He read to the delegation a statement that Turkey had made at the OECD regarding the occupied Palestinian territories, Gaza, Jerusalem and the apartheid wall, but stated unfortunately Turkey could not go so far as to veto the accession. He asked the campaigners to continue their support of the oppressed, and also discussed issues that the groups represented in the delegations had been working

on, including the rise of fascism and Islamophobia in Europe.

Although the trip was not successful in terms of its main object, it was highly successful in a number of other ways. In particular it enabled the IHRC and other organizations represented to meet and establish contacts with numerous senior figures in the government, other political parties, NGOs, academic bodies and the media. These are likely to prove invaluable in the IHRC's future work, as the IHRC has long since realised that the majority of issues it faces are

transnational rather than local, and need coordinated global action rather than only local efforts.

The trip concluded with the launch of the Turkish language edition of Anti-Zionism: Jewish Perspectives – Anti-siyonizm: Yahudi Perspektifinden -- in Istanbul. This programme provided an opportunity for Turkish activists and intellectuals to meet Rabbis Ysiroel Weiss (Neturei Karta, USA) and Ahron Cohen (NK, UK), as well as members of the IHRC delegation.

Read all about it!

Whether you are a journalist, an activist or just a concerned member of the community, you know the difficulties of finding the news stories that interest you...

The IHRC sends out regular alerts and press releases to keep people informed about the issues we are working on. To receive them, sign up to our emailing list via the IHRC website

www.ihrc.org

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Think of the Palestinians this Ramadan

WWW.INMINDS.COM/BOYCOTT-ISRAELI-DATES.PHP

Check the label, avoid dates produced in Israel and its illegal settlements (usually labelled West Bank or Jordan Valley) Israeli dates are sold under the following brands:



IHRC's research into human rights issues and abuses

The Research Section at IHRC has had a busy and productive year, with long-awaited projects and reports from the last couple of years finally coming to fruition thanks to the hard work and dedication of volunteers and supporters.

The result is that we have issued a record number of reports in the last year, as well as launching several new research projects which will hopefully produce useful material in future. In order to better accommodate the breadth of our work, and help it reach a wider audience, we are also in the process of establishing a new publishing imprint, IHRC Press, which is due to issue its first title later this year.

International work

Gratifyingly, the work of IHRC Research has continued to be appreciated at an international level, at both civil society and official bodies. Research and reports produced by the IHRC informed several topics discussed at the Universal Justice Network meeting in Indonesia in November 2010, and were used by several other human rights and other similar organizations.

Among official bodies, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) took a particular interest in our work, such as the British Muslims' Expectations of the Government reports. The IHRC also presented to oral statements highlighting the results of its research on freedom of speech and issues affecting Muslims in countries such as France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway at the annual OSCE meeting on Human Rights in Warsaw in October 2009.

Remembering Genocide

With the launch of Genocide Memorial Day last year, and its accompanying calendar, the research section were charged with commissioning essays to accompany each month's commemorated event. Several of these essays have already been published online. A book containing all of them will be published next year.

Policing and Counter-terrorism in the spotlight

As usual, the issue of counter-terrorism has concerned IHRC across its departments, and the briefing Anti-Terrorism - Whose Hearts and Minds? Contest 2 in Context was published to look at the UK's new proposals under the then incumbent Labour administration.

IHRC also worked with Mark McGovern of Edgehill University in putting together a two day symposium in the Belfast in 2009, which culminated in the release of McGovern's report (with Angela Tobin) entitled 'Countering Terror or Counter-Productive? Comparing Irish and Muslim Experiences of Counter-insurgency Law and Policy'.

However, the most significant contribution to this field came in the form of Adam Majeed's report, 'Policing, Protest and Conflict: A Report into the Policing of the London Gaza Demonstrations in 2008 - 2009'. As the title suggest, it conveyed the experiences of many caught up in the cycle of relentless profiling of protestors by police during the demonstrations. The report not only highlighted the problematic behaviour of many individual police officers, but also identified systemic problems amounting to institutional racial and religious discrimination, particular in terms of profiling. The report suggests ways for the police services to move beyond this.

Perhaps most significantly, the footage and photographic evidence supplied to IHRC and used in the report has helped some those accused of public order offences fight their cases and demonstrate the reckless policing tactics used against them.

Countering Zionist attacks and propaganda

As usual, the IHRC and many other activists have faced prejudicial, unwarranted and sometimes malicious accusations and comment from sections of civil society seeking to promote a pro-Israel agenda. These accusations are often linked to claims about Islam, Islamism and Muslim political activism. In an attempt to highlight the inconsistencies in such claims, IHRC published a briefing in which it reviewed articles on the website of the Community Security Trust (CST). An exchange of counter-briefings between the two organisations ensued, all of which are brought together in one handy document on our website.

We are also currently working on a short report on attacks on anti-Zionist activists, including many Jews, which is due to be published later this year.

Bahrain

Omar F. Ahmed's report, 'Broken Promises', into the failure of constitutional monarchy in Bahrain, is scheduled to be published in September 2010.

This will provide a broader context for the issues previously raised by the IHRC in the two reports on the Karzakan and Ma'ameer trials in 2009 and 2010 have been produced, based on the IHRC observer's visits to the trials and meetings with local figures.

Europe

The research section has also played a key role in the IHRC's work at various levels at the UN, for example in contributing to the panel on Women and Hijab in Europe (the audio of which is available under Activities/Event Reports on our website), and in its submissions to the Universal Periodic Review. One particular report of note this year was to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The report, called 'Turkey's failure to implement its responsibilities towards headscarved women' looks at the enduring problem of the ban on headscarves in universities and other public institutions, which has lasted some 13 years now.

Another report which has made a considerable impact is Seyf-eddin Kara's 'Europe's Shame: Anti-Muslim Hatred and the Roma of Bulgaria.' Based on research field trips, the reports examines the deplorable situation of Bulgarian Roma, most of whom are Muslim and are viewed as unwelcome remnants of Ottoman rule in the area. The report was launched at a program in London in March 2010, with a very moving exhibition of photos from the field-trips.

IHRC's long awaited report looking at Muslim-led organisations' views of their situation in Germany is published in September 2010. Two versions - one in English, one in German - will be available to download as a PDF or buy as hard copy (see the IHRC website).

Reports on freedom of expression for Muslims in the Netherlands and Denmark are due in the coming year, as is a report on religious discrimination against Muslim women in the UK.

Muslims living in 'minority' situations

The Essential Needs of Muslims project is continuing, with its results due to be published in 2011. The Muslims' Experiences of Hostility and Discrimination project, which is trying to identify a working definition of 'hate crime,' and to develop a rigorous methodology to ascertain the levels of such crimes against minority groups, has completed its pilot project. Its findings are due for publication in 2010. Developing this project into on-going process that can produce annual figures and assess long-term trends is a priority for the research section over the next year.

Islam and the West

In 2009, IHRC embarked on a mammoth research project entitled Islam and the West. The project aims to examine and compare conceptualisations of the West in Islamic literature, and conceptualisations of Islam in western literature. The first part of this project, a bibliographical work setting out the various books and theses written in western centres of learning about Islam and Muslims, is due for publication some time in 2011, insha'Allah.

More Liberation Theology

In keeping with its stated aim of maintaining this theme, the IHRC organised an event on 'The Universality of the Theology of Liberation: Views from Muslim History' in London in July 2009. The original papers from Dr. Mohamad Nasrin Nasir and Dr. Daud Abdullah will be published later in 2010. These follow up the groundbreaking IHRC conference on 'Towards a New Liberation Theology: Reflections on Palestine' in 2005. The book published after that conference is still available, as a download from the IHRC website or to purchase as a hard copy.

Translations

A Turkish translation of the report 'Against Zionism: Jewish Perspectives' was published this year thanks to the work and support of pre-eminent Turkish human rights organisation, Mazlumder. A French translation of 'For Liberty' (2009), an examination of the hijab ban in French schools and effects, is due for publication in 2011.

IHRC Press

Finally, IHRC is launching a second publishing wing, called IHRC Press. Its first

Special thanks to all those who have contributed to the projects of the Research section this year:

Musthak Ahmed, Omar F. Ahmed, Taris Ahmed, Ebrahim Mohseni Ahoeei, Mohammad Sharif Shamsi Ahoeei, Samir Al-Haidari, Saeideh Allahdadi, Professor Saied Reza Ameli, Fahad Ansari, Hussain Araki, S. Gül Arıman, Taner Ayaz, Reza Badii, Assed Baig, Mehdi Bakhshaei, Sanja Bilic, Foued Bourabiet, Sahib Mustaqim Bleher, Abed Choudhury, Somaye Dalvand, Akram Goshtasbi, Maryam H'madoun, Vahid Jafari, Mohammed Kamali, Dawud Mwilwa Kapansa, Ayşe Kaplan, Seyfeddin Kara, Reza Kavand, Sumeyye Kavuncu, Meherun Khanom, Margit Liebhart, Tahura Kolbadi, Adam

Majeed, Mahshid Mayar, Oussama Mezoui, Dr. Abdallah Thomas Milcent, Yaser Moradi, Naba Al-Nahi, Nida Nalçacı, Farnaz Ahmadzadeh Namvar, Dr. Mohamad Nasrin Nasir, Hamidreza Nirouei, Özlem Özer, Samira Quraisy, Maryam Rahimpour, Nora Rami, Nawel Reig, Alireza Ameli Renani, Ibrahim Sadikovic, Ömer Şarлак, Haneefa Sarwar, Zimarina Sarwar, Ufuk Secgin, Ehsan Shaghaseemi, Rasoul Shams,i, Cyanide Snow, Bijan Tafazzoli, Furkan Torlak, Ahmed Uddin, Aaron Varicchio, Soheila Zohrabi and finally to Massoud Shadjareh. *Apologies to anyone omitted.*

POLICING, PROTEST AND CONFLICT:

A Report into the Policing of the London Gaza Demonstrations in 2008 - 2009



AFTERMATH:

Gaza in the days after the 22 Day War



EUROPE'S SHAME:

Anti-Muslim Hatred and the Roma of Bulgaria



publication will be a collection of three works by Imam Achmad Cassiem, 'The Quest for Unity and other selected works.'

For updates on all aspects of the IHRC's work, including free downloadable versions of many of our previous publications, go to the newly restructured IHRC website: <http://www.ihrc.org.uk>

Arzu Merali

Universal Justice Network going from strength to strength

The Universal Justice Network (UJN) is one of the ways in which the IHRC tries to co-ordinate its work with other Muslim civil society organizations around the world. One basic premise of the IHRC's work is that most issues we face are global rather than local, and require co-ordinated action by civil society organizations in different parts of the world, which requires networks of communication between them if the work is to be done as effectively as possible.

To this end, the IHRC and Citizens International (CI) in Penang, Malaysia, established the UJN in 2008, in order to provide a regional and international structure for their own work, as well as the work of other similar organizations which choose to join it. The UJN has secretariats in Penang and London, and now includes over 50 groups working in similar fields in more than 20 countries, including such major humanitarian organizations as Mazlumder in Turkey.

Since its inaugural session in Penang in October 2008, the UJN has expanded rapidly, and the last year has seen significant developments in both its project work and its organizational development. At the inaugural session, the plight of Palestinians in Gaza was identified as an issue on which urgent work is required, and a campaign to end or break the Israeli siege of Gaza was launched. This received a major boost a few months later, when the murderous Israeli assault on Gaza in December 2008-January 2009, and the UJN immediately sent a fact-finding

mission there. The findings of this mission, confirmed by the UN Goldstone commission, resulted in a campaign for an international tribunal to be established to try Israelis for war crimes, which is continuing.

Also continuing is a campaign to pressure Egypt to open the Rafah crossing to enable aid to enter Gaza. Members of the UJN were also involved in the humanitarian Flotilla that was attacked by the Israelis in May 2010.

The situation in Gaza was one of several topics discussed at the third International Meeting of the UJN in Depok City, Indonesia, in February 2010. Delegates also discussed the wider situation in Palestine, including the targeting of Islamic sites in Jerusalem, the undermining of the Al-Aqsa complex, and the extrajudicial assassination of political opponents in Palestine and abroad. In response to this situation, delegates supported the boycotting of Israeli products and major brands such as Coca Cola, Starbucks and M&S which aid Israel. It was agreed that the UJN would launch an international campaign to boycott all Israeli goods.

The ongoing wars and occupations in Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia, Kashmir, Iraq and Afghanistan were among other issues discussed. Delegates were particularly concerned about US use of drones against civilian targets, and other strategies and tactics that have caused significant suffering among innocent people and may be regarded as breaches of international law.

A third issue discussed was the



Imam Achmad Qassiem of South Africa, Professor Saied Ameli and Shaikh Ibrahim Zakzaky at the UJN meeting in Depok, November 2009.

situation of Muslim minorities in Europe and countries such as Thailand, Burma, Philippines and China. The fear was voiced that the increasing dehumanization of Muslims mirrors the experience of Jews in Nazi Germany and the Tutsis in Rwanda. The UJN agreed that the rising tide of Islamophobia in Europe needed to be highlighted and opposed as a priority. As Belgium takes over the Presidency of the European Union, the UJN has drafted a letter to Europe's leaders demanding that they immediately tackle this matter. Members of the UJN are currently seeking signatures to the letter from civil society and public figures around

the world.

The annual international conference apart, the UJN also held regional meetings have been held in Cheshunt and London in October 2009, for Europe and North America, Jakarta, Indonesia in February 2010 for the South East Asia region, and Sri Lanka in June, 2010, for South Asia region. Decisions during the meeting of course range from the usual business of determining procedures and membership issues, to training sessions for volunteers in order to share core skills.

As a Muslim led network, UJN is now lobbying the Organisation of Islamic Conference to allow NGO

participation in its activities as announced in its 10 year plan of action launched in 2005. The aim of the UJN is to empower those struggling for justice and to create networks and communities beyond national borders and the imaginary boundaries that have stifled true universality. The work done so far is just a start towards this objective. All individuals and organizations able to contribute to our work in any way, anywhere in the world, are most welcome to join the struggle with us. Alhumdulillah, there is more than enough work to go round.

Ahmed Musa

Dying for the Palestinians' right to live...

Continued from page 1

been a central plank of our work, and makes the front cover of our newsletter yet again this year. Our approach has always been to try to find new and different ways of highlighting the plight of the Palestinians and resisting Israel which are relevant and practical for people everywhere. This is why we have pioneered and advocated boycotts of Israeli goods and the products of companies that support Israel. This was an approach the initially had its sceptics. But for years we have shown success stories of the boycott initiative and due to its momentum we have moved into the next phase of this campaign.

Every Ramadan, we have an influx of dates from all over the world into British supermarkets, and a large proportion of them come from Israel even if they are not labeled as such. The result is that Muslims have for years been eating dates produced by Israelis

and effectively financing and supporting the settlers. Dates are a lucrative business for Israel, even though they are produced on occupied Palestinian land and harvested by poor Palestinian workers. The workers are placed on the tops of the date palms by cranes at 5 am in the morning, and forced to work for up to eight hours in the scorching heat without a break and no means to come down. As they are not allowed to any breaks, there is no way to relieve themselves, so they avoid eating solid foods. The products of this brutality are the dates with which we break our fast.

Among the other initiatives IHRC that has been promoting is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS). Along with our partners, we have spent weeks of painstaking research in gathering information for the movement. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, despite his failing health, has been pushing

for this movement with all his energy and he has recently announced that he wishes to join the next Flotilla II convoy.

Palestine apart, the IHRC is also maintaining its work on numerous other issues, of course. In the UK, a major part of our work has involved opposing the increasingly repressive and discriminatory measures introduced by the government on the pretext of countering terrorism. One success has been the new government's cancellation of the Labour government's £60m Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) program. From the outset, we have criticized this as a program to redefine Islam in terms dictated by the West, and stigmatise as extremist all Muslims who refused to accept its terms. Alas, the program has already resulted in many Muslim organizations being stained with the stigma or government funding, and find-

ing themselves scrambling for alternative sources of support now that it is cancelled. Another success on the domestic front has been the scrapping of the police's stop and search powers. The IHRC has led Muslim opposition to these draconian measures, not least as the only Muslim organization participating in the Home Office's advisory board on them.

Philip Zimbardo, author of the Lucifer Effect, wrote, "Heroism often requires social support. We typically celebrate heroic deeds of courageous individuals, but we do not do so if their actions have tangible immediate cost to the rest of us and we can't understand their motives".

The success of the work of IHRC does not stand solely on its own merits and hard work, it requires the support base of the Muslim community. We are sometimes criticized for our actions, either because people do not agree with our approach, or

because it is not as effective as we would all like. But that is the lot of all those who set out to achieve any public objective. And we are not alone in this. To Israel's north, we see Hezbollah, and to its south, we see Hamas, both fighting on the front line against Zionism and both slammed for their actions.

Now, more than ever before, we need to all work together to fight for injustice around the world. Everything the IHRC does is the result of the efforts and commitment of activists, volunteers and supporters in the community; the institution is only a platform for their commitment and efforts. This year, as every year, we appeal to those who share our concerns and outlook to join us in the work we are doing, so we can better serve those in the world who are crying out to Allah for helpers and protectors in their times of need.

Ahmed Uddin

Volunteering at the IHRC and supporting us in other ways

Participation in the IHRC's letter-writing campaigns, which have helped so many people, is probably the most popular way in which people follow and support the work of IHRC. However there is much more that people can do, if you have time to spare and a passion for the aims and work of IHRC. For more details, you can look at our current volunteer opportunities on our website.

There are many ways in which you can participate - what type of work and the amount of time you want to spend, is entirely up to you. We also have different types of volunteering ranging from simply distributing IHRC newsletters and flyers to becoming a regional co-ordinator.

We particularly feel that it is important for volunteers to feel valued and enjoy what they are doing, as this has shown to be more productive for them and for IHRC. We also try to ensure that while with the IHRC, volunteers pick up skills which are useful in other parts of life. Part of IHRC's aims is to help people and communities empower themselves.

Co-ordinators (not whole groups) are given training days every six months to assist in informing them of IHRC's latest work, ways they can help, reviewing and setting targets as well as being given training in useful skills that will assist in their work.

The overseas based co-ordinators programme is slightly different as the opportunity for local co-ordinator training days is limited. However there is still scope for much to be done in a local volunteer group.

Local co-ordinators are local volunteers who help organise other local volunteers and / or raise awareness of IHRC activities in their area. They are not officers of IHRC, do not represent IHRC, or have any role within the IHRC organisational structure.

Help with research

Many students, professionals and others, have helped us in preparing country and issue reports. Their contributions have included writing full reports, searching for material for others to write the reports, translation, proofreading, and formatting. People involved in this usually have been volunteering with IHRC for some time, and have considerable time to spare.

Supporting the Campaigns and Advocacy Sections

In addition to setting up a campaign group above, you can help both the campaigns and advocacy section with your skills. Both sections of IHRC need qualified interpreters in various languages.

Additionally if you have skills in managing websites and blogs, using Facebook and other social networking sites, you may be able to help promote IHRC work also or even assist with managing campaign pages on our website.

Help us fundraise

Like all other non-profit making organisations, IHRC relies on the



goodwill of its supporters. Some volunteers have undertaken to recruit new financial supporters i.e. those people who give a regular monthly donation to IHRC or raise one-off donations to help IHRC meet the needs of the community. Occasionally IHRC raises money for specific projects. Mainly it raises general funds to be allocated according to need. IHRC does not collect aid. However it has on occasion requested financial help for families of prisoners of faith who are in dire circumstances.

Help at events

IHRC holds vigils, speaker meetings and seminars. Volunteers are

often needed to steward, prepare banners, man stalls etc. These events usually though not exclusively take place in the UK, and involve different levels of commitment from an afternoon manning a stall to a couple of days a week organising a vigil or seminar.

Help raise awareness

Many of the groups and individuals who volunteer for IHRC have undertaken to distribute our literature and materials at their own stalls etc. and at a variety of events around the country. Their contribution helps to spread awareness of IHRC and its work, which includes important issues that the community need to address. Again, this can be an

My internship experience at the Islamic Human Rights Commission

When I was offered an internship at the Islamic Human Rights Commission, I was excited by the prospect of employing in practice the skills I had learned in my legal background. I must admit some concern about the fact that my internship took place for the duration of Ramadan; I was worried that I wouldn't be able to give the best account of myself. However, as a Research Intern, the dynamic nature of the work involved and the atmosphere at the IHR office proved that my fears were ill founded (I barely felt the

fasts!). All in all, my experience as an intern was thoroughly positive and has left a lasting impact on my life. Not only have I built upon my previous research skills, but I have also learnt that a strong work ethic can fostered from a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The dedication of IHRC's staff to some the most noble causes that face us today is inspiring and the internship provides an excellent opportunity to harness and develop those crucial career skills.

Adam Majeed

afternoon's work or several days of organising.

We have a specific one off annual event that involves distribution of our newsletter (in the weeks before and during Ramadan). Distributors take any amount from 5 copies of our newsletter to 5,000 to distribute in their local community. All shipping costs are met by IHRC.

Helping in our London office when it is appropriate, usually administrative, including filing, transcribing, typing, packaging and posting mail etc. It does also require some computer skills and is helpful and beneficial for one's CV.

IHRC's most recent types of volunteering roles through 2010

have been the following:

UK based local co-ordinators, Overseas co-ordinators, translators into languages such as Bosnian, Dutch, Danish, French, Arabic, Urdu, German, Spanish into a high standard, fundraisers and distributors.

IHRC appreciates all the efforts its volunteers make, however large or small and asks everyone to please remember that every act of voluntary work one does is in itself a charity. For more information, see: www.ihrc.org.uk/about-ihrc/current-volunteer-opportunities.

Dawud Kapansa,
Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Ideas for fundraising in the community

Interested in raising funds for IHRC in your community?.Not sure how to do it? Here are some ideas.....

- This year, give IHRC your *zakah* and other Islamic dues, and encourage your friends and family to do so as well. You may do so online at www.ihrc.org.uk/about-ihrc/pay-your-zakat-online.
- Hold an iftar or house party at your hme. Give each guest an envelope when they arrive and ask them to donate something to IHRC and return the envelope to you by the end of the iftar or house party. Alternatively, charge for entry. Make it fun by having quizzes and games and possibly an auction or jumble sale of some old, but good quality, stuff of yours.
- Hold an Eid party or bazaar or fair for your local community. Rent a hall, invite people to hold stalls for a fee, invite others to run activities you charge for, such as henna painting, face painting and games for children. Have a bouncy castle, a cake sale, a jumble sale, sell home-made goods and charge for entry.
- Do a sponsored event and get all your friends and family to sponsor you. Virtually anything can be sponsored:

Walks
Mountain climbs

Charity cycles
Sponsored silences
Sponsored fasts

- Clear out your garage and attic. Hold a car boot sale or an auction or a bring-and-buy sale of all your old, but in good condition, stuff. Get your friends and family to bring their stuff too. Advertise in the local community and in the mosques.
- Sell your old, but in good condition, stuff on eBay or over the internet. Ask your friends and family to donate stuff you can sell for them and raise money for IHRC.
- Hold a family fun day for your extended family, friends, and the local and mosque community. Hold a competitive sports tournament, charging entry and getting all entrants to raise sponsors, per point or per game, among their family and friends. Charge a small admission fee for the viewing public. Run other games and activities for younger children.
- Make a personal piggy bank at home. Donate something into it each day and get your family to do the same. Each month, count it and give what you have collected to IHRC.
- Give regular donations to IHRC via standing orders or direct debit. Encourage

your friends and family to do so as well. Regular donations allow IHRC to plan ahead.

- Organise a collection at your mosque after a congregational prayer for IHRC. If you are getting married, ask your guests to give a donation to IHRC instead of giving a gift to you.
- Consider giving a donation to IHRC on behalf of someone else as a gift to them. Organise an Islam and Human Rights talk, invite someone from IHRC to speak and charge for entry. Possibly have some stalls there.
- Organise a street collection at a key location. You may need to get local authority permission for this.
- Take part in a run or marathon or half-marathon for IHRC.
- Wash cars or outside windows or cut lawns for your family, friends and neighbours for a charge.
- Do almost anything else! Be as creative and as imaginative as you want!

If you decide to do an activity to raise money for IHRC, please feel free to contact us. Jazak Allah kheir for your continuing support. May Allah (swt) help and guide you in your endeavours.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Let me first of all take this opportunity to all those who have supported IHRC over the last year and indeed since its inception. Your support has been the lifeblood of this organisation. I appeal to everyone reading this to continue in their moral, spiritual and financial support for IHRC. We must pool our resources and unite to battle the continuing and worsening situations we find the world in.

This year we stand at the precipice. Muslims – as activists, soldiers in fact in whatever way shape or form, for justice – are faced with urgent choices. If we are to fulfil our role as bearers of truth and witnesses against injus-

This silence can be the result of fear of arrest under anti-terrorism laws, or simply being shunned in a wider public space. So pernicious is the atmosphere now, that Muslims sometimes fear to speak in condemnatory terms about NATO bombings of innocents in Afghanistan and Pakistan or the excesses of any government – save those labelled by the ‘West’ as pariahs. This enforced silence, or worse enforced sense of self-criticism has been so prolonged it has become second nature – and our younger generation has adopted it as a natural mantra, an unconscious acceptance that their ‘own values’ are problematic and the prevailing discourses have more validity than theirs.

So from silence, comes subju-

The institutions of this realm provide the basis from which political maturity and social concern can be harnessed to practical initiatives for both minorities and mainstream societies. In other words, if you have little faith in your faith’s ability to deliver anything of merit either historically, in contemporary times or as contributor to a better future for all, then you allow those with power to consume what little is left of it.

Out of such adversity – such poverty of conscience amongst those of us who consider ourselves in positions of responsibility – come stellar examples. Those brave men and women on the Turkish led Freedom Flotilla attacked by Israeli forces showed us that we can move beyond just talking (if we dare even to talk) about the cruelty being inflicted on the Palestinians. As believers we know – we should know – that their sacrifices were not in vain. The question we must ask ourselves is what are we willing to do to fulfil our part of the collective duty to oppose oppression and serve the dispossessed? It may well be difficult, but we have been promised by Allah swt in the Qur’an that after every hardship come ease. Let us all join the struggle for justice.

Massoud Shadjareh
Chair, Islamic Human
Rights Commission.



© Sir Cam

This year we stand at the precipice. Muslims – as activists, soldiers in fact in whatever way shape or form, for justice – are faced with urgent choices.

tice even if it is to be against ourselves, we need to understand the context of the times we live in.

This year at IHRC we have witnessed and been involved in campaigns in Bahrain that have exposed its so-called reformation as a sham, yet another corrupt and nepotistic national project masquerading as a model of political reform for the Middle East. Despite the continued practice of torture and the impunity with which police and security services operate, the movement for change in Bahrain continues. Political trials drag on as we speak, with those charged facing long sentences and harsh conditions. Protestors coming out onto the streets face being shot and killed, and yet the protests and civil disobedience continues. This if anything should be an example to all of us who claim to support truth and justice.

Yet we are faced by possibly the biggest and worst problem – and in large extent it is of our own making. Over the years we have seen intense pressure being levied on Muslim communities worldwide, especially, but not solely against those living in so-called minority situations.

As individuals it is unsurprising that so many have buckled under the pressure from governments, political elites and mainstream media to be silent.

gation – a self-imposed subjugation – to the prevailing norms of the societies we live in. The blame for this rests at the level not of masses but leadership. Instead of standing up against burqa bans in Europe – because we should know that this is just the tip of a gargantuan iceberg that will encompass more legalised forms of anti-Muslim and other racisms – we engage in polemics on the poverty of Muslim history, the need to develop a ‘European Islam’ and the promotion of fiqhi positions against the nikab at the expense of other fiqhi interpretations in order to appear moderate and progressive to the government. Perhaps worse still is the acceptance of the line pedalled by government and far right alike, that ‘we’ – that is, Muslims and minorities with heritage from the so-called developing world – are better off ‘here’ than in our ‘own’ countries.

By validating the situations we find ourselves in, we fail to grasp the following: that whatever our views on nikab, discussion on it are part of intra-community discourse, not something to be negotiated via any state. To allow these discussions to be determined in any other manner undermines all notions of civil society i.e. the world of social interaction between the levels of state control and the family unit.

BOYCOTT ISRAELI DATES

Settlements Israeli settlements built on stolen Palestinian land have been ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice. Nearly half of the settlements in the Jordan Valley grow dates, its their most profitable crop, and contributes significantly to their economic viability. Most of the Israeli date crop – up to 80%, is exported, mainly to Europe where it has around 10% market share. In 2005, dates were Israel’s leading fruit export. If you oppose the settlements target their dates.



Palestinian child working in Israeli settlement

Exploitation Picking of the dates is hard work, Israeli settlers bring in low payed Palestinian labourers to do this back breaking work. During the pruning season, workers are dropped on the date palm trees by a hoisting crane at 5 in the morning, left perched on palms that soar to heights of 12 metres – a 4 storey building, left there swaying in the wind for up to 8 hours without even a toilet break, with no means to come down until the crane returns at the end of the day, the workers cling to the tree with one arm and work with the other to meet their quota. If they complain or fall behind they will lose their jobs.

Child Labour The Israelis prefer to employ children – even issuing them official work permits, as they can climb trees faster, work for less and it’s easier to cheat and humiliate them. Out of desperate poverty Palestinian families are forced to take their children out of school and hand them over to the settlers to work for a pittance.

Guilty Companies The two major Israeli companies involved are Agrexco and Hadiklaim. Agrexco, half owned by the Israeli state, handles 60-70% of all goods produced in the settlements. Its dates have brand names Carmel, Jordan Plains and Jordan Valley. Carmel boasts that they manage an early crop of dates in time to meet the Ramadan demand from Europe’s Muslims! Hadiklaim, the Israeli Date Growers Cooperative, which includes illegal settler plantations in the Jordan Valley, sells 65% of all Israeli dates. Its dates have brand names King Solomon and Jordan River. They also supply Israeli dates to supermarkets who market them under their own brand. These include Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Asda and Waitrose. Sometimes they are labelled “produced in the West Bank” – remember these are not Palestinian dates.

Plea From Palestine Peace activists who visited the Palestinian village of Fasayl in the Jordan Valley discovered that villagers are slowly being forced off their land by the Israeli army for future settlement expansion. The only livelihood left open to them is to work for Carmel Agrexco. The activists even spoke to two Palestinian children under the age of 12 who were working for Carmel. The Palestinian workers whose land had been stolen and were forced to work for Carmel in order to feed their families – they had a message for the peace activists, a plea for anyone who would listen – they urged them to take action against Carmel Agrexco and such companies that support Israeli apartheid. What excuse is left for us not to boycott Israel?

www.inminds.com/boycott-israeli-dates.php

For more information of our publications and access to reports and briefings, please log on to our website
www.ihrc.org.uk
or contact us on
+44 (0) 20 8904 4222

Innovative Minds
www.inminds.co.uk

Palestinian Return Centre
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Islamic Human Rights Commission
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NOTES: You can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying the charity. If in the future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income and capital gains equal to the tax that the charity reclaims, you can cancel your declaration. If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your Self- Assessment tax return. If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief ask your local tax office for leaflet IR 65. Please notify the charity if you change your name or address. Please note the charity cannot fund any political work or lobbying for a change in existing law (please see page 16 if you are interested in donating to all of IHRC's work including its noncharitable work).

IHRC merchandise and campaign material



There are many ways you can help IHRC -- one of them is to buy our publications and merchandise.

The items listed below are only some of our products For a full range, see:

www.ihr.org.uk/catalog

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REPORTS

Below are some a list of our most recent reports. More details on them are available on-line. Most IHRC reports are available to download from our website without charge, The prices are for bound hard copy versions, and include postage and packing.

Police, Protest and Conflict: A Report into the Policing of the Gaza Demonstrations 2008-09. This report is an examination of how the British police dealt with protests in London against Israel's war in Gaza. 96pp. Price: £7.00.

Towards a New Liberation Theology: Reflections on Palestine Compilation of paper presented at a IHRC conference on the same subject. Pub: March 2009. £5.

Europe's Shame: Anti-Muslim Hatred and the Roma of Bulgaria Based on the report submitted to UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (see p. 6 above). Pub: 31 July 2009. £7.

Aftermath: Gaza in the Days After the 22 Day War. (7 May 2009) A diary account of two lawyers who visited Gaza to collect testimony from victims of the war. Cost £6

For Liberty? (12 February 2009) The Impact of the French Ban on the Islamic Headscarf and other Religious Symbols in Schools. £6

British Anti-Terrorism: A Modern Day Witch-hunt (Revised July 2006) A must read for all those concerned with the British government's war on terror and its implications for its Muslim community. £6.

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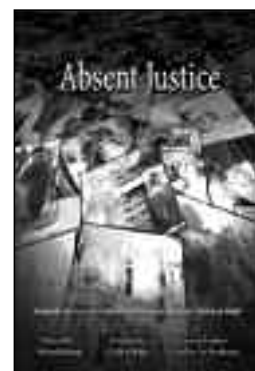
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Boycott Zionism Pocket Sized Card. This latest card lists pro-Israeli companies in a handy pocket size. Per batch of 50.

Boycott Israeli Dates A5 Leaflet. Per batch of 50.

Charter 3:103. (Sep 2005) Charter 3:103 is a document which outlines simply the Qur'anic verse which calls for unity amongst Muslims. Per batch of 10.

'Know Your Rights' Leaflet. A brief guide for people affected by anti-terrorist laws: your rights if contacted by MI5, Special Branch or other parts of the security apparatus in the UK or if you are arrested or your premises are searched. Handy credit card size. 50.



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- FREE set of Eid cards with any order over £10
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Prisoner of Faith: Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, USA. The Morocco 12; Imam Jamil Al-Amin, USA; Khairat Al-Shater, Egypt. Please specify on the form which packs you want.

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VIDEO: Human Rights, Justice and Muslims in the wake of September 11, 2001. Seminar from October 2001. £8. Price includes postage and packing.

DVD Set: Absent Justice. Seven DVDs in the set, recording the Israeli operation "Defensive Shield". A Vision for Art Production. £19.95. PG. Price includes postage and packing.

BOOKS

Globalization, Americanization and British Muslim Identity by Dr Saied Raza Ameli. 340 pages, (2002). This book, by one of IHRC's founders, looks at the development of British Muslim identity and the challenges to it from the globalization of Hollywood culture. £17.00.

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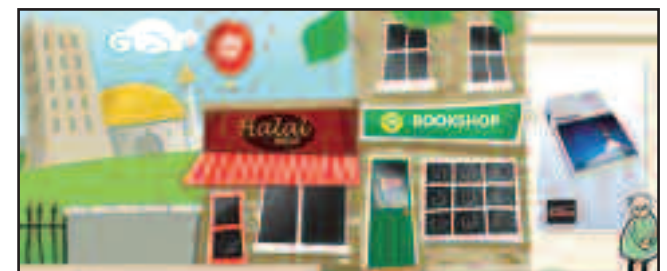
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and the next.
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**Islamic
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