

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

ANOTHER YEAR, SAME CHALLENGES



A rocket is launched from Israel known as Iron Dome. On March 11, 2012 witnesses say a Palestinian and a 12-year-old boy have been killed in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip.

More bombs drop on Gaza and more children die. It is this year and every year, unending for over six decades. Yet, again, we fail to see them unless some small facet of the Western media sees fit to give a passing glimpse into the ongoing misery and devastation that the Israeli usurpation of Palestine continues to inflict on the occupied. This is the cruellest oppression because when push comes to shove, we forget and forgo Palestine for whichever other cause catches our fancy. The second year after the so-called Arab Spring bears witness to this gruesome fact –

Muslims have not learned, they simply wallow in the latest agenda set or hijacked by the West.

These are harsh words to contemplate as we move into Ramadan again, a time fit for contemplating our path and seeking nearness to our Creator. We opine yearly about how we are commanded to stand for the oppressed whoever they may be and that Islam sees no difference between peoples based on ethnicity or culture. Yet we have seen the worst of tribal, sectarian and nationalist strife erupt in the Arab world and South Asia this year, within the Muslim community. This is the culmination of years of failed thinking and socialisation of those move-

ments who should seek to save all mankind because they are inspired by and follow (supposedly) the Mercy to all Mankind, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him.

The question we must ask ourselves is whether we really are willing and able to break this vicious cycle.

If we are to do something about this, we need to be critical of how we understand and where we take our knowledge from. It seems easy for us in our own local and national situations to understand when the media is being Islamophobic. IHRC's landmark research based on surveys continues this year, with the publication of the hate crime project results from France. As

with the UK, Muslims there see the media as the biggest promoter of hatred against Muslims. How is it then, that when so-called riots erupted in the UK in the summer of 2011, rather than see an uprising in response to a (nother) callous police killing, Muslim organisations and spokespeople took the view of the media that painted similarly degrading and phobic representations of black communities and young people? Likewise, the traumas faced by those fighting for justice in the Arab world seem only worthy of Muslim mention when simplistic and often incorrect and US agenda led reporting of their

Continued on page 3

Focus on IHRC



Documenting abuses against protesters in Tahrir Square, Egypt, November 2011



Showing solidarity with those struggling in the Islamic awakening



Broadcasting events live to a worldwide audience



Quds Day, London 2011

AMBITIOUS PROJECT ASSESSES MUSLIM EXPERIENCES OF HATRED, HOSTILITY AND DISCRIMINATION GLOBALLY

Since its inception fifteen years ago, the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) has been at the forefront of the battle against all forms of discrimination. IHRC has paid particular attention to different manifestations of racist and religious discrimination. The latest IHRC research project, entitled, Muslim Experiences of Hatred, Hostility & Discrimination, has the ambitious task of conducting a comprehensive survey of such experiences among Muslim communities, as well as communities and individuals perceived to be Muslim, in different countries across the globe. The project is to be rolled out annually in different countries in an effort to increase its scope and relevance.

At the centre of IHRC's effort is the vital task of prevention by changing the culture surrounding debate of the topic. Hate crimes of the extreme and violent variety, such as physical attacks against

crimination.

Of the people surveyed, 40% or more, said that they had experienced both explicit and implicit forms of discrimination and abuse. There were 29 categories of negative experiences; IHRC found that 20 of these were highly prevalent amongst those taking part in the survey.

Five categories of negative experiences were experienced by over 60% of those surveyed.

Worryingly 14% of people reported being subjected to violent physical assault a severe offence that can leave individuals

75% of people surveyed... had experienced... discrimination

individuals and arson and vandalism perpetrated against places of worship, do not take place in a vacuum. Such acts are nothing but the inevitable reflection of much deeper problems of hate present within society. Only when hatred is legitimised as an accepted 'fact of life', and is then further promoted through media and political discourse that employs hateful and insensitive language, stereotyping and the negativity towards religious practice that it becomes possible for violent hate crime to even be contemplated. One of the core aims of IHRC's project is to expose the oft-overlooked relationship between extreme manifestations of hate and the broader environments in which they thrive.

The project's pilot study was first conducted in 2010 in the UK and in France. The results of the UK study, published in IHRC's 2011 report, Getting the Message: The Recurrence of Hate Crimes in the UK, unveiled some significant findings. Among Muslims surveyed by the study, 75% had experienced some form of Islamophobic dis-

traumatised.

The findings of the survey conducted in France are soon to be published in a new report by IHRC. This report also considers the historical development of French culture, politics, interaction with Islam and Muslims and precepts of multiculturalism, studying the effects of each on contemporary public attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. The most frequently reported incident of discrimination by French survey respondents, identical to their British counterparts, was that of witnessing negative stereotypes of Muslims in the media. This is significant as it demonstrates the key role played by the media in promoting hatred and discrimination.

The years 2011/2012 have seen a dramatic expansion of the project in terms of both scope and ambition. The survey is being conducted this year in both the US, across the state of California, and nationwide across Canada. The format of the survey has been further refined since last year in order to reflect the opinions of respon-

GETTING THE MESSAGE: THE RECURRENCE OF HATE CRIMES IN THE UK

Saied R. Ameli
Ebrahim Mohseni Ahooei
Ehsan Shaghasemi
Maryam Rahimpour



IHRC's first publication
in the series

dents more clearly. Distribution of the survey has been significantly stepped up, with nearly a fivefold increase in returns over the previous year's pilot study. Conducting this large-scale project across North America required the cooperation and active participation of national and regional Muslim organisations deeply involved with civil rights in both countries. Reports on both the US and Canadian surveys are to be published later in 2012.

IHRC's project, Muslim Experiences of Hatred, Hostility & Discrimination, is one of the first of its kind. By conducting this series of surveys in different countries IHRC helps empower minority communities under threat of discrimination and hostility. The findings, give communities access to solid statistical evidence as a way to of tackling underreporting of hate incidents. Providing regular statistics to governments or local authorities can enable them to understand the problems that Muslims face. Most significantly, the project makes an important contribution to the development of a model that can be used annually to research and tackle this problem across the globe. Hatred and discrimination is a global problem that can only be truly addressed by addressing its root causes.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This year has been yet another challenging one for all those who are concerned about human rights and justice. In the UK we have seen a further erosion of civil liberties in the veneer of safety and security. In recent months, we have witnessed the militarisation of the streets of London under the banner of anti-terrorism and security for the Olympics. Military personnel operating on the streets of London, missiles on rooftops and the possible use of sonic weapons are some of the measures that have been brought in. The hysteria that has been created in Britain, Europe and beyond has legitimised this and many other acts which would not have been tolerated in any other circumstance. The concept of 'otherness' has been used and promoted in order to legalise these unacceptable activities. Muslims are identified as the 'other' and in turn, dehumanised, portrayed as having barbaric tendencies and carrying out terrorism. We have witnessed this whole concept playing out in Iraq, Afghanistan and through the use of drones that assassinate people; the faceless victims of trial by murder. This is a continuation of the unaccountability that we have witnessed in Guantanamo Bay. People are seen as guilty and without recourse. Muslims are being labelled as 'terrorists' and killed around the world without any evidence and

fair trial. Innocent family members of those targeted are also brutally murdered by drones then these actions are shamelessly justified as collateral damage in the so-called war on terror. Reports from leading newspapers and human rights organisations identify that 70% of people that are killed by drones are innocent.

human beings. It is very clear that there is no justified reason for the perception and prejudicial concepts against Muslims that has been created, promoted and systematically sustained. What is needed is to strengthen the confidence and self determination of Muslims based on Islamic ethos and understanding. As a follower

This is a continuation of the unaccountability that we have witnessed in Guantanamo Bay. People are seen as guilty and without recourse

Reuters published a report in April 2012 highlighting how the CIA and other security agencies are systematically spying on Muslims who attend mosques and Islamic centres. These actions are against US law as the CIA should not be involved in internal investigations. The basic principles of fair trial, due process, requirement of evidence have been breached and overlooked when it comes to dealing with Muslims. What makes matters worse is that now many Muslims and Muslim organisations also see themselves through these paradigms and feel that they must prove the misconceptions wrong and that that they are lesser

of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) who is a mercy to the entire universe, we should also be the mercy for all creation and work towards a just society which does not have the oppressed and the oppressors. However, the aim of creating a just and free society cannot be achieved until we regain our confidence in ourselves, our deen and hold to the rope of Allah as mentioned in verse 3: 013 of the Quran. The verse says 'and hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allâh (i.e. this Qur'ân), and be not divided among yourselves'. This verse is a command of Allah to all of us and we all know how special it is in a time when sectarianism has become a tool. In



Massoud Shadjareh Chair, Islamic Human Rights Commission

fact, it is the preferred tool of colonialism to divide Muslims which stops us from working on our absolute goal of a just society. Lets make an oath that we will not allow anyone to divert us from our unity and mission of creating that just society for all based on Islamic principles.

Continued from page 1

cause is daily fed to us. We do not comprehend the unending violence being perpetrated against indigenous peoples by colonial powers. We seek help instead from those same colonial powers. One Muslim academic tweeted this year in defence of US interventionism, 'When my house is on fire, I do not question the motives of my rescuers'. It would make sense, if only the so-called rescuers were not the ones who set the house on fire in the first place. It is clear that we live in a climate where we neither understand 'other' Muslims, nor do we care for 'others' who are oppressed. We see only difference, and we see only our own pain and interests.

At a seminar co-organised by IHRC this year in Kuala Lumpur, Imam Muhammad Al-Asi of Washington D.C. highlighted the extent of Muslim conceptual illiteracy. Al-Asi seeks through his tafseer to bring back Islamic conceptual meaning to the terms we often understand through colonialised translations into English and other languages. Rejecting the translation man or human or humanity for the term insaan he states that the term means 'social being'. Once you consider each other as social beings, you understand your inter connectedness. There are no 'others' then, just one social entity made up of social beings. If Muslims could bring this understanding to the world – then we would truly have an Islamic Awakening, and the revolutions we seek, could actually be real.

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Shazia suffered a breakdown in her marriage and was left penniless and homeless. She turned to her community for support but found none. Then she was told about the National Zakat Foundation and her life turned around.

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EXTRADITION TO STOP & SEARCH: BATTLING THE AUTHORITARIAN BRITISH STATE AT HOME AND ABROAD



It has been another long and difficult year in campaigning against and raising awareness of the injustices that the UK, sometime on its own at other times at the behest of the US, perpetrates domestically. It has needed some strength to find partners to work on these issues, and support those who are amongst the most vulnerable in society. Ranging from taking on individual cases, running or joining campaigns, to networking with others to learn from past experiences and working out a new way forward, IHRC has spent this year trying new methods, and revising old ideas on what to do about the Authoritarian British State.

Extradition

Several men, at least 6 of whom (if not more) are Muslim, face extradition from the UK to the US under the unjust Extradition Act 2003. The Act allows for the US to demand extradition of any person from the UK without having to provide evidence as to what they are wanted for, and regardless of whether those accused could be charged with the same or a similar crime in the UK. Thankfully, there has been some momentum around the injustice of this act due to the cases of men like the 64 year old Christopher Tappin (already extradited) who was set up in an FBI sting operation (which is illegal in the UK), and Richard O'Dwyer the 23 year old student who faces up to 10 years in prison in the US for setting up a website that directed surfers to places online where they could watch TV or Film. However the cases of the Muslim men, whilst beginning to get attention from within and without the Muslim community, are not so readily supported – an indicator of the extent of the anti-Muslim atmosphere in the UK.

Adel Abdel Bari is the longest

serving detainee without trial in the UK – some 14 years. He is an Egyptian national awaiting extradition. So too Khalid al Fawwaz, a Saudi citizen, and also long term detainee. Nasratollah Tajik, held under restrictive bail conditions, is a former Iranian diplomat facing decades long sentences in the USA if sent there, as many of his co-nationals and other Muslims have received in recent years. Already in ill health, he is one of the forgotten. Abu Hamza al Masri, is another, who, though much reviled (often based



Hamja Ahsan
Talha's Brother



Joining with others to remember Guantanamo at 10

on demonization rather than fact), is another of the men in the same predicament as is Babar Ahmad, arguably the most well-known of the Muslim detainees. IHRC supports all these men and indeed all those, Muslim or not, who face extradition in this way.

However, IHRC has given particular support to the Free Talha campaign, seeking justice for Syed Talha Ahsan, a poet and writer detained for 6 years. As with Gary McKinnon, who is sought in the USA for hacking into the Pentagon server, Talha suffers from Aspergers Syndrome. Whilst he too is wanted

on a cybercrime charge, unlike Gary, who as a sufferer is on bail, Talha has been incarcerated in Long Lartin. His case exemplifies not just what is wrong with the Act but also what is wrong with the society we live in. IHRC commissioned Turab Shah to write and direct a film about the cases of Talha Ahsan and Babar Ahmad, based around some of Talha's poetry. The director's cut of the film has been touring the UK another version will be broadcast on Press TV. IHRC has also helped promote the 'Extradite Me – I'm British' T-Shirt and Flashmob campaign (buy your T-Shirt from the IHRC online shop ihrc.org.uk/catalog, or

Using film to campaign

via this newsletter pages 5 and 15).

At the time of writing, the cases of these men hang precariously after initial appeals to the European Court of Human Rights were rejected.

Remembering Guantanamo

The link between the anti-terrorism laws, the Extradition Act and foreign policy – the idea that international struggles and domestic struggles form part of the same narrative against a common enemy, is one that IHRC is actively involved in raising awareness of. As part of this, it helped co-organise the Guantanamo Remembered conference in London, in January, with Cageprisoners and Reprieve. Videos of the event can be seen on the IHRC Youtube channel IHRCTv.

Advocacy at home – a brief overview

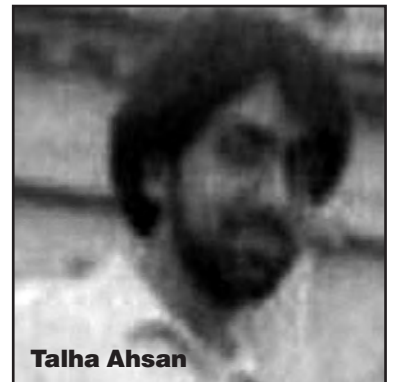
Similar problems can be reported again this year, with police harassment largely around intelligence gathering being a key theme. Serious efforts are being made to recruit spies within the communities and to promote a culture of informants. Other forms of police harassment that have been reported to us, include the use of stops and searches, but particularly also the use of Schedule 7 at ports and airports. The latter harassment is of such a scale that even the most basic procedures in place are often not followed or ignored. IHRC receives many reports of abusive and insulting behaviour from officers in this scenario.

Again, highlighting the Islamophobic nature of the environment that we live in, institutional discrimination at the local level, in education etc. continue to feature in our caseload. Employment cases featuring unfair dismissal and discrimination are recorded again this year, as well as discriminatory strip searches in prisons. We have been working on discrimination against a Muslim school by the local council, as well as various issues including failure to provide a prayer room at schools. Although not directly dealt with by IHRC, the case of a mother who was refused entry to her child's parent's evening because she wore a niqab, is another sad indicator of the level of hatred Muslims face today in what should be safe spaces.

Learning from others

In an effort not just to firefight, but to work towards solving long term problems and creating a more just society for all, IHRC has spent much of this year networking with groups that have shared similar struggles, whether in the North of Ireland or the North of London, from Traveller and Gypsy groups to the Black Panthers. Whilst there is some specificity to the Muslim experiences of hostility, hatred and discrimination, there is also much to be learned from these struggles. It is time for us to really unite to fight oppression, not just the cause celebrities of a biased media and political elite that would divide and rule us all.

By Irma Khan



Talha Ahsan



Babar Ahmad



Khalid Al Fawwaz



Abu Hamza



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Ramadan In Prison

For the next few years, Ramadan, the holy month of Ramadan will take place during the summer months. In this month, Muslims are required to abstain from all food and drink from sunrise to sunset each day. Summer is tough – the days are long, the nights are short and the weather is hot, so then imagine spending the month of fasting in prison. Every year thousands of Muslims spend Ramadan in a UK prison.

Regarded by Muslims as a blessed month, Muslim prisoners look forward to the coming of Ramadan. It brings joy, and at the same time tears to the eyes as prisoners long to spend this special time with their loved ones. As the old saying goes, to hear is to forget, to see is to remember but to experience is to understand. A serving prisoner who wishes to remain anonymous shares his experience with us.

My first Ramadan in prison

I was sentenced in June 2011 before the beginning of Ramadan. On the night before the first day of Ramadan, we were given a breakfast pack consisting of a small carton of milk and a small bag of cereal, along with the time table for the month.

Isolation

As we were fasting our cell doors would not be opened up as normal at food times during the day. We would be let out for exercise at 7am every morning for half an hour and then again for about an hour in the evening to have a shower, make our phone calls and put in any applications we may require. This meant we were locked up for about 22 hours each day.

In the evenings, the prison officers would come round the cells to distribute our evening and breakfast packs. The prison made arrangements for a thermal box which we all had to sign for, and in which the food would be kept warm until the time came to eat. I would watch my cell mate eat throughout the day while fasting and he would watch me eat at night. Unless we were fortunate enough to share a cell with another Muslim inmate, we would eat in our own cell on our own. My cell mate would turn the TV off long enough for me to break my fast and pray my evening prayers.

I would pray for the day I could break my fast with my family again. The hustle and bustle of cooking food and the gathering of the kids.

Difficulties

We were required to wash our thermal box and have it ready for collection in the morning so that they could be sent back to the kitchen and refilled for that evening. This was a task in itself as the sinks in the cells are small and the water available is limited to 3 presses every hour, for security reasons.

I would wake up in the late hours of the night to eat my breakfast pack and prepare to begin the next day's fast. I would then offer my morning prayers. The cells are very small and we have to be careful while moving about, as disturbing a fellow inmate in a confined space in the early hours of the morning could result in undesirable repercussions. At times I would find myself tip toeing in the dark to avoid disturbing my cell mate, and reading the Quran in the dark with the assistance of what little moon light I could capture through the bars.

On the night of the 10th of

Ramadan I was given notice that I would be shipped out to another prison by 6pm the following day. The prison they were moving me to was a 3 hour journey away and I would therefore be unable to keep my fast. The system in the new establishment was similar to the one I had just come from.

Eid

On Eid, the day of celebration marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, we would offer Eid prayers together, similar to how Friday prayers were already being performed. At the new prison a function was organised during which fellow inmates told personal stories of how they came to Islam and how it had changed their lives. One particular revert wrote a rap about his experience and some others recited Islamic songs. The prison also made arrangements for food and for the first time in my prison experience I found myself eating with other people of the same faith. It was quite an experience as we took many things for granted when we were outside these walls, and now the smallest of favours is like a breath of fresh air which you find yourself most humbled and grateful for.

Separation from family

My family also came to visit me on Eid. It was great to see them again. They would normally visit every week, but during the month of Ramadan it became very difficult for them as the distance of travel would render their fasts invalid, so our contact was restricted to regular phone calls throughout the majority of the month.

Request from IHRC

The Muslim prison population is currently around 10,600, making up 12.6% of the overall UK prison population. The prisoners face many hardships which are accentuated by the harsh conditions in prison. Some are not even aware when Ramadan starts and when Eid is being celebrated due to being disconnected from the wider world. Muslim prisoners make up one of the most vulnerable groups within our community. Let us keep them in our duas during this blessed month.

By Melihat Akay

IHRC AT THE UNITED NATIONS

IHRC has continued its work at the UN as an ECOSOC accredited organisation. It has submitted reports on many countries including France, Belgium, Bahrain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Bulgaria, Australia and Austria.

IHRC puts human rights violations on the UN agenda and makes recommendations to member states and UN institutions to protect human rights in all countries. Over the last year IHRC has made a number of oral statements, submitted written reports to the UN and organized side panel events. IHRC believes that Muslims who are subjected to discrimination and hate crimes are largely unrepresented in the United Nations and it attempts to fill the lacuna by raising the concerns of the Muslim community. IHRC has worked and raised concerns on a number of issues, some of them are as follows:

Anti Terrorism Laws in UK

IHRC is deeply concerned about the continued discrimination in the application of Schedule 7 and has expressed its reservations at the 13th Human Rights Council Session which took place on 21 May 2012. IHRC has also been campaigning nationally and internationally, and has published press releases to highlight the injustices being done to ethnic minorities including Muslims under the name of anti terrorism laws. Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 previously allowed police officers to stop people at will without requiring any suspicion; this has now been ruled illegal by the European Court of Human Rights as a result of successful campaigning by human rights organizations including IHRC. Also, Schedule 7 powers allowed police officers to stop people at ports and airports without requiring any suspicion. Schedule 7 has been proven to be used disproportionately, to target Muslims and

BME communities at ports and airports for security checks. IHRC expects the continued rise of the targeting of Muslims in 2012-2013 and therefore is committed to continue its campaign against this discriminatory legislation.

Hate Crimes

Recent studies show that hate crimes and Islamophobia activities are on rise. IHRC submitted an oral statement to highlight the plight of the Roma Muslims residing in Bulgaria and have been experiencing the worst racism and Islamophobia on record. The Roma Muslim families routinely denied access to education, employment, health care and housing. IHRC highlighted the sufferings of these families at the UN and urged the government of Bulgaria to provide the same standard of living to Muslims as other citizens.

In May 2012 IHRC submitted a report at the 12th Session of Human Rights Council to raise its concerns over the ban on the construction of minarets in Switzerland. This disturbing ban which shocked the international community and human rights advocates around the world breached the freedom of religion protected under Article 9 of ECHR and Article 18 of ICCPR. In addition to this discriminatory ban Swiss People's party demonstrated its ideology of hatred against Islam by presenting a manifesto against the Islamisation of Switzerland in November 2010. Moreover, in September 2011 Swiss MPs approved a move to impose a ban on the burqa or other face coverings in public places. Such extreme measures mentioned above are giving a loud and clear discriminatory message to Muslims and suggest that political parties in Switzerland in particular the SVP want to develop hate policies against Muslims which would result in limiting their religious freedom.

By Sasuie Abbas Leghari

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REPORTS AND BOOKS

- France and the Hated Society: Muslim Experiences, forthcoming 2012, £9
- Getting the Message: the Recurrence of Hate Crimes in



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, Large Small

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.

the UK, 2011, £8

Reflections on Chinese Policy in Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, 2011, a photo essay Limited Edition, £20

Universal Theology of Liberation, 2011, M.N. Nasir and D. Abdullah, £3.50

Quest for Unity and other Works, 2011, Imam Achmad Cassiem 2011, £8



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See page 15 or the IHRC website for more publications and merchandise... and special Ramadan offers

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UJN regional meeting panel in Bandung



Meeting with the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM).

Summary of Universal Justice Network (UJN) Activities

UJN trip to Indonesia and Malaysia

IHRC travelled to Indonesia and Malaysia to strengthen ties with other human rights organizations and the global UJN network. Accompanying IHRC was Imam Al Asi from Washington Elected Imam of Washington DC Mosque and Dr Javad Sharbaf lecturer in Political Science at Tehran University.

In Indonesia the team headed to Bandung, Indonesia where we were met by local activists. A meeting was set up where several workshops took place, allowing activists the platform to learn and share with others from around the world. Imam Al-Asi spoke on the Arab Spring highlighting the Western attempts to infiltrate and hijack the revolutions that are taking place across the Middle East. IHRC Chair, Massoud Shadjareh spoke on the need for unity and to build capacity of human rights organizations whilst strengthening global ties. The meeting was a success and UJN felt that the points resonated well with the participants.

Meeting at Governor's residence

On the last evening of the visit to Indonesia the UJN team was invited to the residence of the Governor of West Java, Ahmad Heryawan, and were hosted by his wife Netty Heryawan.

Netty Heryawan is a humanitarian that has helped many street children and helps them in their

rehabilitation. She has paid for many of the girl's education and helped them move forward after they were exploited for the sex trade. She also pledged to look into working with UJN. Massoud Shadjareh and Mohideen Abdul Kader from Citizens International (CI) also pledged to work with her and both parties agreed that migrant worker rights is a major issue.

Meeting with Indonesian official

UJN representatives from IHRC and CI met with Muhammad Anshor, Director of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Points and issues raised were as follows:

1. UJN representatives Massoud Shadjareh and Mohideen Abdul Kader said that Indonesia should do more to represent Islam and Muslim issues.
2. The country should do more against sectarianism, something which is very alien to Indonesia which has been a very tolerant society. The representatives pointed out how the sectarianism phenomenon is very dangerous in destroying the harmony of Indonesian society.
3. Abuses against migrant workers especially in the Middle East with particular attention paid to Saudi Arabia. We need to campaign and join forces so that the Middle



Activist and leader Netty Heryawan presents awards to honour UJN leaders

Eastern countries recognise Indonesian workers as workers and employees that have international rights as workers.

The above three points were agreed upon by the UJN members and Indonesian officialw. Massoud Shadjareh also said that Indonesia needs to strengthen civil society and needs to take an active role in doing so. Indonesia should take a lead from other countries that may be more advanced in stages of civil society such as Turkey, Iran and Egypt. All these can be instrumental in changing and supporting civil society. Massoud Shadjareh also requested that IHRC and CI work with the Indonesian government and foreign office to support the

application of consultative status to the United Nations of Indonesian UJN members.

Malaysia

The IHRC team presented a joint workshop with CI held at the University of Malaysia in the Islamic Studies department. Imam Al Asi spoke on 'Islam and Human Rights', Arzu Merali spoke on 'Human rights and anti-imperialism' and Massoud Shadjareh spoke on activism. The question and answer session brought an interesting but disturbing trail of thought. Questions arose as to whether demonstrating was haram or not. Imam Al Asi explained that it was not demonstrations that were

haram in and of themselves but how demonstrations could be used for both good and bad. Upon our return to the UK, we realized why there had been an issue around demonstrating – following recent demonstrations asking for electoral reform in Malaysia the Malaysian fatwa council had ruled that demonstrations in Malaysia against the government were now haram.

Sectarianism

The team met with some Malaysian Shias who are facing discrimination; Haji Abdul Rashid, Muhammed Kamal and Haji Mahmood. Since the IHRC's last visit they have written to the federal government about the recognition of their 'faith' and 'sect'. But Massoud Shadjareh encouraged them not to isolate themselves from the rest of the Muslims by referring to themselves as a different 'faith' or 'sect', but seek unity as this is much more in-line with the anti-sectarian message of IHRC and CI.

Internal Security Act Meeting

IHRC representatives met with Syed Ibrahim, chairman of the Abolish ISA Movement. The good news was that the detention without trial has been reduced from 60 days to 28 days. After 28 days the authorities have to either charge or release the individual.

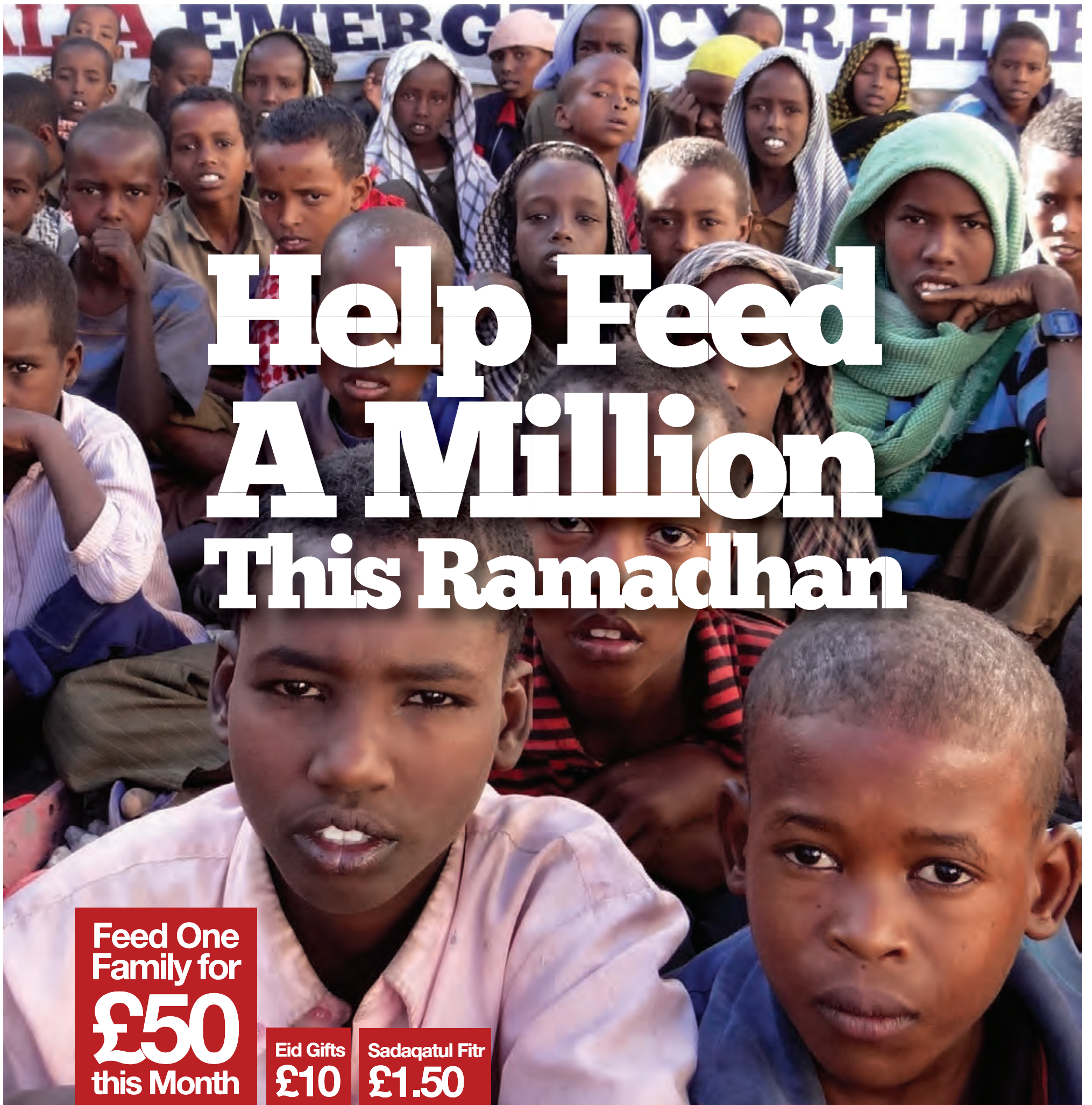
However, the police can appeal against the decision to release and the individual has to stay in custody until the appeal is resolved. Like the UK, Malaysia uses electronic tags to ensure that individuals abide by the strict conditions imposed on them.

The police can deny legal access for the first 48 hours of custody, but the suspect still has the right to remain silent. The law is very similar to control orders, in some cases the Minister of Home Affairs decides when the suspect can be released. It is almost as if they modeled it on the British model.

There is not much of a campaign against the law, currently there is no briefing on the law and the IHRC representatives were not sure what campaigning has been done. Massoud Shadjareh suggested a short briefing on the law, especially in the run up to the elections. Using the briefing as a tools to educate people about the law as well as a lobbying aid. Politicians want to get elected and it will be much more difficult after the politicians are elected for them to sign up to anti-ISA statement. Massoud Shadjareh also said that the issue should be bought up in the context



Outside the Governor of West Java's residence after meeting with Netty Heryawan in Bandung



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The Fight for Freedom Continues in Bahrain

Since the beginning of the Islamic Awakening in Bahrain in February 2011, the country and its opposition figures have been sidelined by the mainstream media. Hassan Mushaima, the leader of the Haq Movement, has likewise had his struggle against the Bahraini regime ignored by much of the Western press.

The Haq Movement is one of the largest opposition groups in Bahrain. As the constitution forbids the formation of and participation in political parties, "associations" like the Haq Movement have been formed to give a voice to Bahrainis against the monarchy and its regime.

Mushaima has faced questionable treatment whilst imprisoned. He has worryingly been blindfolded on more than one occasion, and taken to be injected with substances against his will. Hassan Mushaima is particularly vulnerable due to his fluctuating health, and was put on a course of regular preventative medicines after he

was successfully treated for cancer at the Royal Marsden hospital in London in 2010.

The sixty-five year old leader was sentenced by a military court on 22nd June 2011 to life imprisonment for his activism in the widespread protests and demonstrations the country faced that year. His trial was conducted in an 'emergency' military court, despite martial law having ended on 1st June. His co-defendants were also sentenced, and received up to life imprisonment. The trial was lambasted by human rights activists and legal experts for not meeting the basic standards of a free and fair legal process, enshrined in Articles 10 and 11 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

IHRC has been at the forefront in campaigning for Hassan Mushaima since 2009. Since Hassan's imprisonment in June 2011, IHRC has worked tirelessly to give him a voice as the world's media has ignored – and continues to ignore – the struggle of Bahrain's movement for freedom and justice.



Photo © Aljazeera

Signalling victory at the outset of the revolution in Bahrain

The everyday reality in Bahrain is that those opposing the Al-Khalifah regime's stranglehold on the Gulf Island are demonised, criminalised and then subjugated by the security apparatus. Indeed, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry has noted how Hassan was – along with Al-

Wefaq leader Ali Salman – demonised by the Bahraini media.

This reflects how easily a pronounced Muslim ideology in Bahraini politics can result in one being demonised by the regime. Activists such as Hassan confront the danger of not only being

imprisoned or tortured, but also being labelled as "sectarian", or more ominously "trouble-makers", by the Al-Khalifahs. This is often used as an excuse by Western politicians to not speak out against the regime's campaign of oppressing its opposition figures. Bahrain, they say, is 'complicated', – while Libya and Syria are not.

IHRC wishes to thank all of its campaigners for their perseverance in fighting for Hassan Mushaima whilst politicians have ignored him. Yet we cannot stress enough the importance of continuing to campaign for prisoners such as Hassan. The British and American governments seek to preserve the Al-Khalifah regime, and disassociate Bahrain's struggle from other struggles in the region. Defending the Islamic Awakening in Bahrain begins with countering the propaganda of the Bahraini regime, which demonises those struggling for emancipation. Hassan Mushaima and Bahrain must not be forgotten.

By Sasan Aghlani

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Release of Canadian Imam Shaykh Usama al-Atar

One of IHRC's biggest success stories of the past year has been the release of Canadian Shaykh Usama al-Atar.

Usama al-Atar is a well known figure in the Canadian Muslim community. He has taught Islamic History, Arabic, Qur'an and Ethics across North America. In addition to his role as lecturer and Qur'an reciter in the Muslim community, he is also a researcher at the University of Alberta in Chemistry; with several publications in the fields of Diabetes and Cancer research.

Usama al-Atar was jailed in Saudi Arabia during the Hajj pilgrimage while leading supplicatory prayers for around ten pilgrims in Jannatul Baqi on 30th October 2011. Saudi religious police (mutawateen) attempted to force him to desist in leading these special prayers. Mindful of avoiding confrontation, Usama and the other pilgrims attempted to relocate. They were nevertheless pursued by the mutawateen, who drove them into the Mosque of the Holy Prophet.

It was in the Prophet's Mosque that the mutawateen began to shout at Usama that he was a thief, and violently restrained him. This caused him to bleed and have the flow of blood to his head constricted. He was then arrested and taken to the Central Police Station in Medina.

The mutawateen claimed that Usama broke the arm of one of the mutawateen who physically assaulted him – a claim denied by Usama and many eyewitnesses. Those that witnessed the attack on Usama complained that the mutawateen had been antagonising and



Usama al-Atar

persecuting groups of particular pilgrims, including members of different congregations.

For thirty-six hours, Usama was held shackled in a cell by Saudi authorities. He described the conditions in this cell as "horrid". Soon after he was jailed, around sixty pilgrims gathered outside the Central Police Station to hold a silent vigil for him.

IHRC received word of Usama al-Atar's case directly from pilgrims that witnessed the events firsthand. They were in constant contact with the IHRC team as events unfolded in Saudi Arabia, and relayed information quickly and accurately. This was central in IHRC swiftly launching the campaign, and mobilising support for Usama on an international scale. The campaign was soon picked up by international news agencies, and garnered the attention of Canadian politicians.

Upon release, Usama thanked IHRC and its staff for their pivotal role in securing his

freedom. He lauded IHRC's "tireless efforts" in bringing his plight to the world's attention.

Usama said, "I would like to thank IHRC for their efforts in helping me personally – as well as many other individuals – for the sake of justice."

"This is a cause that one should praise, and (that) is what one needs to push for – and that is establishing social justice for everyone."

IHRC is indebted to the many individuals on the ground in Saudi Arabia that instinctively contacted IHRC when they observed the abuse of Usama. The immediate flow of accurate information to IHRC's staff meant that IHRC was effective in publicising Usama's case. These sources continue to place IHRC's campaigns for the oppressed at the forefront of human rights activism, especially in the Muslim world.

Yet it is also important that we remember those facing similar ordeals in Saudi Arabia, who have not been as fortunate as Usama al-Atar. The mutawateen have a track record of provocations during the Hajj pilgrimage, and many pilgrims have found themselves victimised because of their sectarian affiliation or country of origin. With this in mind, IHRC's supporters should continue to demand freedom and justice for all prisoners languishing in Saudi jails and prisons; regardless of confessional background. In order for us to help people in the future, it is important for people to get in touch with us as soon as possible with accurate information and we will do our utmost to help.

By Sasan Aghlani

Saudi Prisoners Release

This year, four men were successfully released from Saudi prison after resilient campaigning by IHRC supporters! Dr Sa'eed Al-Zu'air, his son Dr Mubarak Al-Zu'air, Mr Mukhlif Al-Shammari and Mr Thamer Al-Khidr were finally released by the Saudi authorities in February 2012. All four men have been prominent and ardent human rights activists among Saudi civil society, often promoting constitutional and political reform. They were arbitrarily detained and held incommunicado for over a year whilst being subjected to abhorrent conditions.

Dr Mubarak Al-Zuair and his father Dr. Sa'ed were imprisoned by the Saudi authorities for speaking out against government policy. Dr. Mubarak had been actively

advocating on behalf of other prisoners at the Ministry of Interior on the day he was detained. This however was not the first time. Prior to their incarceration, they were frequently jailed for speaking out against the Saudi regime, and as a result stripped of their basic rights of due process and legal representation. Both have been held in solitary confinement at times, and suffer from physical ailments that have worsened under the appalling prison conditions they were kept in. During Dr. Mubarak's latest imprisonment, he wrote a letter that outlined how the human rights violations of the Saudi authorities had sunk to new depths. Although IHRC commends both his and his father's release, it was not followed by that of their brother, Sa'ad Al-Zu'air who remains detained.

Saudi human rights activist, Sheikh Mukhlif al-Shammari, was another of the men who remained in detention by Saudi officials for over a year without trial. This was allegedly over the content of his opinion pieces in various newspapers and the claim that his writings were "annoying others". Prior to his arrest, Sheikh al-Shammari authored several opinion pieces in his local Ha'il newspaper in addition to other online magazines. His work has included topics such as women's rights and has been a mediator between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia. Those close to the Sheikh were repulsed by the way in which he was treated in prison during that time, in addition to the intimidation of his children by security forces and the raiding of his office in which private documents were taken.

Thamer Al-Khidr, the last of the men, was one of the cases that was acknowledged by the Saudis as arbitrary detention and therefore illegal according to Saudi and international law. This realisation by the courts based primarily on Article 114 of the Saudi Criminal Procedure Law however did not free him. Since 2010, he was kept in solitary confinement and experienced psychological and physical torture. He has suffered from hearing loss due to nerve damage in his right ear after investigators slapped him continuously and repeatedly hit his head to the ground. Despite this he was still denied access to any medical care and his health has thus deteriorated. More than 7 months after his arrest, no charges were made against him and he was denied any legal representation. On 8 June 2011, the First Administrative Circuit Court in the Riyadh Board of Grievances issued a verdict ruling

that Thamer was indeed detained arbitrarily by the Directorate of General Investigations (DGI) and that he must be released. This ruling was ignored and he remained in prison 8 more months until his release in February.

These men are only four examples of the thousands of political prisoners who are arbitrarily detained at the hands of the Saudi authorities. They regularly experience torture and years of detention with no charges brought against them or legal representation. The Islamic Human Rights Commission will continue to campaign on behalf of arbitrarily detained prisoners in Saudi Arabia. The work does not end here and we will not cease to call on the release of all political prisoners. You too can help in the campaign by sending the letters to relevant authorities and show that you will not sit quietly while injustice is going on.

We are all Palestinians

Al-Quds Day was marked last year on 21 August, with one of its largest turnouts of near 6,000 marching in solidarity and chanting, "In our thousands, in our millions, we are all Palestinians."

IHRC carried out a campaign in 2011 to raise awareness of the plight of the Palestinians and ways to help them by taking part in the Al Quds Day march. Campaigning included advertising on the underground, broadcasting the Al Quds commercial on TV and radio stations and promoting the cause online. In addition to this IHRC also participated in talks in Islamic Centres and Mosques discussing Al Quds Day and the importance of the event. IHRC arranged coaches from different parts of the country, giving the opportunity for people to attend from across the UK. There were a diverse range of people on the march, 23 organizations were present from secular and faith groups

to anti-Zionists.

The march ended in Trafalgar Square where the rally took place. Sean Clinton a member of the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign began the speeches by discussing the Boycott of Israeli Blood Diamonds campaign in Ireland, which he is also the chairman of, and explained how he exposed the trade in Israeli blood diamonds which caused a major uproar amongst Israeli diamond dealers.

Lauren Booth, journalist and staunch Palestinian activist, expressed the words 'no justice, no peace', claiming that there will be no solution to the Palestinian genocide unless it is given justice which is awarded to other countries across the globe. John Rees from the Stop the War Coalition concurred Booth's sentiments and discussed the ongoing struggle of the Palestinians to regain their homeland.

Lez Levidow, member of Jews Against Zionism, spoke about how

Jews are opposed to the Zionist movement and its ideology and to its detrimental impact on both Palestinians and Jews. This was followed by a powerful speech from Rabbi Ahron Cohen who is part of Neturei Karta; an international organization that is opposed to the establishment of and retain all opposition to the existence of the so-called "State of Israel". The Rabbi explained how Judaism is a religion of peace and is thousands of years old, and that Zionism is a political ideology that actually goes against the fundamental principles of Judaism. He aptly expressed the words 'Zionism is Fascism'.

Abdul Wahid from Hizb ut Tahrir and Moulana Syed Taqi Razavi called for a united effort from Muslims to raise awareness of the Palestinian crisis. This activism was also supported by Natasha Lewis from London Boycott Divestment Sanctions campaign who explained how crucial it is



not to fund the Israeli occupation and that by boycotting organisations that support and finance Israel and Israeli products can help save a Palestinian life.

IHRC Chair, Massoud Shadjareh, concluded the rally by stating that Al-Quds Day is the "international day of protesting against oppression," bringing together a "wide spectrum of organisations, faith groups and people of all ages campaigning for human rights and protesting against the bru-

ality of the Israeli regime".

IHRC also held Al Quds Day Conference in Birmingham on 27 August. As well as IHRC's own Nazim Ali (chairing), Massoud Shadjareh and Raza Kazim, guest speakers included former Guantanamo Bay detainee, Moazzam Begg and Sameh Haideri from Palestine Return Centre. The conference attracted over 200 people.

By Zainab Bhalloo

Your brother was sleeping in a bus shelter... until he found us.

Bilal worked for his brother, but was disowned and thrown out after converting to Islam.

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Mamade Kadreebux renowned photographer, writer and painter presenting his exhibition at the IHRC Bookshop



IHRC hosting an Islamic Art Exhibition by the artist Siddiq Juma.

The Islamic Human Rights Commission Bookshop, Gallery and Information Centre: One year on

A YEAR has passed by and IHRC bookshop, gallery and information centre has hosted many memorable events, exhibited beautiful artwork, from renowned and local artists, and supplied specialist, poetic, children's and Islamic books.

We hosted the first art exhibi-

tion across the Middle East with Limited edition pictures available only by us.

In 2012 we brought the distinguished work of well known photographer, author and artist, Mamade Kadreebux, to IHRC. His stunning photography is limited edition and exclusive to IHRC

Our range of books has developed, especially our children's books. These are quite popular amongst the mums out there with a generous range of books from Islamic to fiction, all are admired. With new and exclusive objet d'art which boasts exquisite Iranian handicrafts from Khatam pieces to



Customers browsing through the bookshop



tion for Siddiq Juma in November 2011 and it was a great success not only for showcasing and promoting an up and coming artist, but for IHRC as a gallery. We also had the world renowned Muhsin Kilby exhibiting his photography 'My Palestine - reminiscences and experiences of a photographer concerning Palestine', from his travels

like many other works we promote. Dignidad Rebelde are a couple: Jesus Barazza and Melanie Cervantes who promote work through the activist standpoint which put perspective on the great meaning behind each exclusive print. These, again, are only available in the UK to customers worldwide by IHRC.

hand painted enamel work as well as real mother of pearl on Swedish wood from Egypt and much more.

Not to mention our specialist range of books, which has attracted those interested in the topic of human rights as well as Islamic thought and poetry. Our range of specialist books which include issues about Palestine, Black history, Radical publications by Citizens International, Malaysia, and the political perspective.

We have had many triumphant author evenings and in September 2011 we welcomed Salman Sayyid to discuss two of his most prominent books 'A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism', and 'Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives', edited by AbdoolKarim Vakil. These books provide a unique perspective on Islamism in the West. A Fundamental Fear discusses how Islam has taken form as a political identity in recent decades and the ways in which it has challenged the notion of European and Western supremacy.

Kwame Nimako discussed his latest book 'The Dutch Atlantic', in October 2011. His book provides an erudite history of Dutch slavery,

revolts, abolition efforts and emancipation and assesses the historical consequences of this for contemporary European society.

Victoria Brittain a renowned journalist and author who joined us on December of 2011 to discuss her powerful play The Meaning of Waiting. The play has won International acclaim and has been in theatres in the West End and America educating the people on the horrendous events of Guantanamo Bay and the reality of control orders in Britain. The play based on real-life follows eight women who came to the UK as refugees or married refugees when they came to the UK and how their life was drastically transformed after 9/11.

IHRC commemorated Israeli Apartheid Week with exclusive pre-release excerpts of Over the Wall documentary by the Football Beyond Borders team in February. The film is about a journey of a British University football team who are transformed by the events they bear witness to on their way to Palestine during the Arab Spring. Over The Wall provided a refreshing insight into a unique group of young men who, through their journey, challenge common perceptions of 21st century London, the Middle East, football and activism. The team members expressed their opinions on the changing world around them and how they display increased awareness as a group eventually coming to find a political voice.

With many events taking place in the shop we also catered for children in their school holidays by holding story telling sessions. The first was in October 2011, about Hajj and 'Malcolm X goes to Hajj'. The children thoroughly enjoyed the event with interactive activities teaching them the significant pillar of Islam. It was a beneficial event for the children and adults alike.

Reading by children of Saeed

Bahmanpour's 'The story of Ashura' took place in December which commemorated Muharram, an Islamic month giving prominence to the martyrdoms that took place in Islamic history. This not only reminded us of the inhumanity which took place at the time but taught the children the manner in which the great people handled the situations they were placed in.

For this year we have many great author evenings planned, so join our mailing list by visiting our website www.ihrc.org.

With a great range of DVD's about the different human rights atrocities which have taken place globally but also the inhumane torture of innocents with an emphasis on Islam and human rights in theory and praxis is reflected throughout our collection. We have a wide range of books and DVD's from radical pamphlets by Citizens International covering issues of structural violence, books addressing issues of Palestine, terrorism, Islamophobia to children's fiction and non-fiction books, DVD's, artwork and much more.

With a delicious range of hot drinks, a friendly and relaxed environment you can enjoy your visit to IHRC bookshop as well as benefiting from our latest promotions and exhibitions.

Not only do we take orders for books and DVD's we also promote the work of artists such as 'Artistic Alauddin' who customise canvases for the specification of the individual. Orders can be over the phone: 020 8904 4222, via email: hajrah@ihrc.org or in-store requests. Larger orders will receive a concession, so make the most of our fabulous offers.

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30,000 Political Prisoners in Saudi Prisons

THE SAUDI Arabian prison system was exposed when it was revealed that more than 30,000 political prisoners were being held under horrendous conditions. The number is three times higher than the official maximum capacity and has resulted in a state of appalling overcrowding.

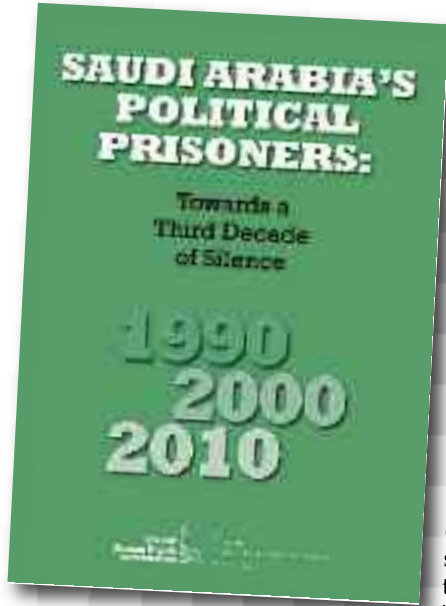
The problem of political imprisonment in Saudi Arabia is so acute that no sector of Saudi society has been spared. Reformists, human rights activists, lawyers, members of political parties, religious scholars, bloggers, solitary protestors, as well as long-standing government supporters who

merely voiced mild and partial criticism of government policy have been imprisoned. The recent imprisonment of Egyptian human rights lawyer Ahmed al-Gizawy, defence attorney to a number of Egyptian political prisoners in Saudi Arabia, during his trip to perform the Umrah pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, has sparked a diplomatic crisis between the two countries. All this has made the issue of political imprisonment a central rallying call for those calling for political reform within the country and without.

IHRC has been at the forefront of exposing these issues. The IHRC

briefing, Saudi Arabia's Political Prisoners: Towards a Third Decade of Silence, was published in October 2011 to much acclaim in both the English and Arabic languages, gaining it broad exposure on the Saudi Twittersphere and online social networking communities. The study places the ongoing government strategy of arbitrary imprisonment of political opponents and sham trials within the context of three decades of the uninterrupted employment of this tactic as an effective tool of silencing and control.

The 1990s witnessed early movements within Saudi Arabia



towards political reform and calls for greater recognition of rights. The government, unaccustomed to such unprecedented political expression, responded harshly with a large-scale wave of arrests, and meting out long prison sentences for the reformists. The years 2000-2009 saw Saudi citizens raise new questions regarding the legitimacy of its government's actions, particularly its cooperation with the US-led invasions of both Iraq and Afghanistan. This led to renewed

calls for reform by a number of scholars, academics and human rights activists, the most prominent of whom were summarily imprisoned. The Saudi government exploited the pretence of the so-called 'Global War on Terror' to further extend the reach of their 'anti-terror' laws, allowing them to be used as a silencing tool against peaceful reformists. In the new decade, and especially since the advent of the Islamic Awakening across the Middle East, the Saudi regime has been especially brutal in its suppression of dissent throughout the nation, and indeed across the border in neighbouring Bahrain.

The Saudi government has failed to adapt effectively with the times and it remains in denial as to the changes taking hold in the region. Its continued employment of arbitrary imprisonment and sham trials over the span of three decades, to the point of extreme overcrowding, testifies to the fact that the change in Saudi Arabia is inevitable – the youth in Saudi Arabia know this very well and they are no longer afraid.

UNIVERSAL JUSTICE NETWORK (UJN) TRIP TO EGYPT

AS THOUSANDS of people poured into Tahrir Square in November 2011 to demonstrate against the military's slow transfer of power, an IHRC delegation as part of the Universal Justice Network (UJN) was there to meet, support and talk with the people involved. After the popular uprisings changed the political landscape of both Egypt and Tunisia, an IHRC fact-finding mission was tasked with meeting various civil society groups. It was an opportunity to share the skills and knowledge needed to establish an Islamic model of justice and human rights within societies that were now vulnerable to foreign intervention. The delegation included IHRC Chair and representative of the London secretariat Massoud Shadjareh, and representative of the Malaysian secretariat Mohideen Abdulkader in addition to members of IHRC's campaigns team. This exciting and dynamic relationship between the network and those on the ground began in March 2011.

The delegation dedicated several hours to meeting with individuals who were protesting and supporting the events in Egypt's Tahrir Square. Notably, the crowd in the square was very diverse. Amidst the 'organised chaos', young, old, female and male supporters roamed the square. Not everyone felt compelled to push to join in the clashes with the military but they knew it was important that the numbers in the square spoke for themselves. Their greatest concerns were the fatalities and injuries to those

protesting; the source of which was nerve gas used by the military. This gas, an injured doctor explained, has no antidote and the injured were only being treated with valium. The military had not only used this gas against protestors in the square but had allegedly fired the gas in a nearby metro station and hospital.

On past trips, the UJN had met with individuals such as Khairat Al-Shater, deputy chairman of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and others for whom IHRC has campaigned on behalf of during their time in prison. This particular trip to Egypt was a further opportunity to meet with the family of the prominent Sheikh Omar Abdulrahman. The supporters and campaigners for the Sheikh had been staging a sit-in protest in front of the American embassy since August 2011 to raise awareness. They were showing no sign of letting up. The campaigners have seen a tremendous awakening in Egypt recently regarding Sheikh Abdulrahman as many groups including secular parties, the Nasserite party and even the National party associated to Hosni Mubarak have all highlighted the plight of the Sheikh. This gives the campaigners hope that when the Sheikh is released he will be greeted as a national hero. The Islamic Human Rights Commission has been the only organisation to campaign on behalf of the Sheikh from the very beginning. He has appreciated this and thanked the campaigners for their hard work. He has even expressed

the hope of becoming a member of IHRC upon his release!

Over the course of the visit, the delegation met with various individuals actively involved in progressive change. All expressed their interest and enthusiasm in working with UJN. As a network whose priority is that of the Ummah, there is a need to not only bolster the confidence of the youth but to inform them of the tenets of Islamic justice. There is an ongoing concern that if Muslim organisations do not provide this knowledge, then others who are less suited to the sensitivity and needs of the Egyptian people will. After several days of activist meetings, IHRC began to explore and evaluate the best ways to provide the services needed by the people. The delegation realised it was necessary to train them to feel comfortable in holding their governments accountable and engaging politically. All of those involved agreed this was an exciting and necessary opportunity.

In Tunisia, similar conferences and lectures are also to be arranged for the youth and led by UJN. Speakers will include leadership figures from within UJN as well as individuals such as ex-Guantanamo Bay prisoners and Jews who are against Zionism. This will expose the youth to the international struggle for justice and the ways in which they can rise up and take on the issues on themselves. Over time, UJN will facilitate the addition of certain Tunisian organisations to the network

in order to instigate a ripple effect of propagating knowledge and skills throughout Tunisian civil society.

In both Egypt and Tunisia, it was clearly noted that the media and international NGOs are being financed by external sources which are trying to undermine the Islamic and revolutionary change the masses have risen for. This was most evident in the false international media

reporting. The delegation was shocked by mainstream media outlets such as BBC and CNN who were reporting strikingly different accounts than what was witnessed. Articles would report reasons for the demonstrations in Tahrir square which were completely the opposite from the demands of the people interviewed on the ground. This discrepancy could only be described as

deliberate. The need therefore to establish linkages with the various groups involved in the country is increasingly necessary so our understanding is not limited or impacted. The Islamic Human Rights Commission will continue its support of the various groups in Egypt and Tunisia and will soon extend to other countries such as Libya to achieve these very goals.

AL QUDS DAY

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2012**

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Boycott Israeli Dates Campaign

Illegal Settlements

In 2004 the International Court of Justice ruled that the Israeli settlements are illegal – they are built on stolen Palestinian land. Growing dates is one of the major agricultural activities carried out by nearly half of the illegal Israeli settlements located in the Jordan Valley – it's 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.

Exploitation

Picking of the dates is hard work, so the Israeli settlers bring in low-paid 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 5am, left perched on palms that soar to a height of 10 or even 12 metres, and left there swaying in the wind for up to 8 hours without even a toilet break. All day long the

workers cling to the tree with one arm and work with the other to meet their quota. They only come down when the crane returns at the end of the day. If they complain or fail to meet their employer's target they will lose their jobs.

Child Labour

The Israelis prefer to employ children, even issuing them official work permits, as they are quick and light, can climb trees faster, work for less and are easier to cheat and humiliate. 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 settlement produce. Its dates have brand names Carmel, Jordan Plains and Jordan Valley. Carmel boast that they have managed to produce 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. It also supplies Israeli dates to supermarkets and retail chains who market them under their own brand names. These include Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda and Waitrose. Sometimes they are labelled "Produced in the West Bank" or "Jordan Valley" – 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 urged them to take action against Carmel Agrexco and other companies that support Israeli apartheid. What excuse is left for us not to boycott Israel?

Campaign

This is the fourth year running that Innovative Minds and the Islamic Human Rights Commission have launched the Ramadan "Boycott Israeli Dates", campaign calling on campaigners to create awareness in their communities about the boycotting of Israeli goods, and in

particular Israeli dates. It is perhaps the most successful year so far with leaflets having to be reprinted three times in order to meet demand. Organisations supporting the campaign include London BDS (londonbds.org), Palestinian Return Centre (prc.org.uk), and the Muslim Association of Britain (mabonline.net). Special thanks to sister Huma and brother Tapash for their tremendous dedication to this campaign.

The video "Boycott Israeli Dates", specially created to support the campaign, can be viewed or download at www.inminds.com/boycott-israeli-dates.php

TO BOYCOTT M&S IS TO BOYCOTT ISRAELI APARTHEID

In January 2008, in a reply to an IHRC letter enquiring about M&S' relation to the State of Israel, Chief Executive Sir Stuart Rose stated: "We do not have a 'special' relationship with any government."

BUT Lord Marcus Sieff, former chairman of M&S, wrote that one of the objectives of M&S is to aid the economic development of Israel (Management: The Marks & Spencer Way, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1990). An M&S spokesperson explicitly confirmed that "We are as close to Israel as we have ever been." (Jewish Chronicle, 22 December 2000)

BUT M&S supports Israel with \$233 million in trade every year (Jerusalem Report, 5 June 2000). The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) in New York reports: "The clothier bought about \$325 million worth of merchandise from Israel last year." (JTA 13 December 2000, Richard Allen Greene, 'British store shrugs off boycott threat from Muslims')

BUT In 1998, Benjamin Netanyahu, then Prime Minister of Israel, presented Sir Richard Greenbury of M&S with the "Jubilee Award", the highest tribute ever awarded by the State of Israel, in recognition of his achievements in strengthening the Israeli economy. (Virtual Israel 02 February 2001, Internet Archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20010215155146/www.amflowers.com/awards/index_company.htm)

Our concern is not with M&S' Jewish roots, but its historic and continuing support for Israel. This is not an issue of race or religion, but human rights.

FACT In 2008 alone, 66 homes were demolished in Gaza and the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, due to houses being 'built without permits' and for alleged military purposes. Those operations left 349 adults and 184 children homeless. (B'Tselem 2008, <http://www.btselem.org/english/PI>

announcing_and_Building/Statistics.asp and <http://www.btselem.org/english/Razing/Statistics.asp>)

FACT M&S brand socks, underwear and lingerie are supplied mainly by Israeli textile giant Delta Galil, Israel's largest manufacturer and marketer of textiles. (Corporate Watch 2009, <http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=3207>)

FACT Israeli suit manufacturer Bagir "outfits 1 in 6 UK men, mainly through Marks and Spencer." (Israel 21c 28 April 2008, http://www.israel21c.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2006&catid=58:environment&Itemid=101)

FACT M&S admits their UK suppliers purchase dates from well-known settlement exporter Hadiklaim, though this contract prohibits purchase from Palestinian Territories. (Profundo 2009, <http://www.soas.ac.uk/lawpeace/mideast/file49531.pdf>)

FACT M&S also stocks grapes, lychees, figs, plums, dates, fresh herbs, sweet potatoes and potatoes from Israeli state-owned Agrexco, another settlement exporter (Palestine Israel Ethical Shopping Initiative [PIESI] 2008, <http://www.easi-piesi.org/marks.html>)

'I've been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about.' Archbishop Desmond Tutu (The Guardian 29 April 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/apr/29/comment>)

For detailed information and further research findings on M&S, please visit <http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-marks-and-spencer.html>

Think of the Palestinians this Ramadan

BOYCOTT ISRAELI DATES

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

"The Ummah are like one body: If the eye is in pain then the whole body is in pain.." Prophet Muhammed (pbuh)

The hand of a girl from the Samouni family buried under the rubble of her home in Gaza (18 Jan 2009).

Israeli soldiers ordered around a 100 people into the Wa'el Samouni home at gunpoint. They then bombed the house killing 29 people.

Survivors, including children were left trapped in the rubble for 4 days, as Israel refused permission to rescue teams to dig them out

On a remaining wall, a message was left written in Hebrew. The Only Good Arab is a Dead Arab

Check the label, avoid dates labelled Israel, West Bank, Jordan Valley or 'produce of more than one country'. Dates from Israeli companies are sold under these brands:

HADIKLAIM

KING SOLOMON

KARSTEN Farms

KALAHARI

Carmel

Jordan River

mehadrin

JORDAN VALLEY

Supermarkets labelling Israeli dates as their own:

Waitrose

M&S

J Sainsbury plc

TESCO

ASDA

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

Genocide Memorial Day



Panellists at the first session of GMD taking questions

People from across the country and the world including school children, Rabbis, genocide survivors, NGOs and journalists joined Islamic Human Rights Commission on Sunday 22 January at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS University in London for its annual Genocide Memorial Day (GMD). GMD is a day given to remember man's inhumanity to man in the perpetration of genocides and genocidal acts from the transatlantic slave trade to the genocidal acts in Palestine. The foundation of GMD is based on the argument by various thinkers that several genocides underpin the modern era. GMD fea-

tured a range of presentations by panel speakers including Ilan Pappé from the University of Exeter, Neigeme Glasgow-Maeda a film director and Rabbi Ahron Cohen amongst others. This year IHRC had a range of schools involved to support and raise awareness of GMD by sending out GMD lesson plans to over 200 schools and also teaching it within schools. GMD helped students to recognise that all genocides should be treated with equal recognition and respect. IHRC also raised awareness about Genocide Memorial Day by advertising it on the underground,

broadcasting the GMD commercial on different TV stations and community centres and also participating on a variety of programmes on TV especially dedicated to GMD. This all led to a wide variety of people from various backgrounds turning up on the day and 26 organizations from secular and a multitude of faith backgrounds to support the conference including the Church of Scotland, University of Essex Human Rights Society and International Solidarity Movement (London) amongst others. During GMD Lauren Booth, activist and journalist started proceedings of the event with the trans-

lation of Surah Al Ma'idah in the Holy Quran 'We decreed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul, without its being guilty of manslaughter or corruption on the earth, is as though he had killed all mankind, and whoever saves a life is as though he has saved all mankind'. This verse from the Holy Quran highlighted the message of the day, that all people are equal and the killing of one irrespective of race, religion or culture should be recognised and reprimanded. Professor Saied Ameli from the University of Tehran and one of the co founders of IHRC discussed "Genocides and Right of Life: Physical and Cultural Genocides". Ameli discussed the theory of the gruesome act of genocide and why it continues to prevail in society today. Bruce Kent a political activist and honorary vice-president of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) launched the GMD poetry competition for 11 – 18 year old to encourage students to explore the topic of genocide in an original and thought provoking manner. IHRC award the winning prize of a paid trip to Bosnia so that the students can witness the impact on the region in which the genocide took place to Frano Vainio-Doiseul from Deptford Green School in London for his poem 'Who Am I'. Professor Ramón Grosfoguel provided an informative talk on the decolonisation of the Holocaust and how it was a result of the rise in racism in Europe that was provoked as far back as the time of Christopher Columbus. This was followed by a moving message from Rabbi Ahron Cohen from Neturei Karta on a Nazi Holocaust survivor. Neigeme Glasgow-Maeda director of Caribbean Corner introduced his documentary the Faces of the Slave Trade which explored the importance of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery to everyday

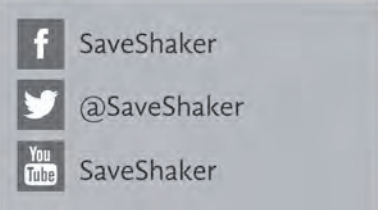
working class Black Brits, spanning 3 generations. Professor Ilan Pappé then followed with a discussion on 'Memocide: Crime, Closure and Reconciliation in Palestine'. He explained how the greatest success of Israel with help from Western powers was to reduce Palestine geographically and demographically to a small size in a process of ethnically cleansing Palestine. The professor's speech gave an acute account on the continuous and ongoing genocide that is taking place today which was supported by Yemeni poet Sanasino who recited a poem entitled 'My Name is Not Irak' that described the horrendous acts of the western allies on the Arab state. Hasan Nuhanovic, a Bosnian survivor of the Srebrenica genocide provided a heart rendering story on how during the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, his immediate family including his mother, father and brother alongside thousands of other Bosniaks were handed over by the Dutch UN soldiers to the Bosnian Serb army to be killed. Siddiq Juma, artist and animator, launched the GMD animation of a child that kept changing appearance to different cultural characteristics skipping down the street with a red balloon. The child is suddenly confronted by gunshots which blows up the child's balloon and covers the screen with blood. The animation focussed on the deaths of children in genocide and it also contained a scroll on the bottom of the animation with children's names that have been victims of the policy of genocide. This important message was followed by the closing speech by the Chair of IHRC, Massoud Shadjareh, who expressed that we need a united front to stop the genocide of today and tomorrow and recognise the people that are being demonised.

By Zainab Bhalloo

RETURN SHAKER AAMER TO THE UK FROM GUANTANAMO



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British resident Shaker Aamer has a British wife and four British children. He has been held at Guantanamo for 10 years without charge or trial. He remains imprisoned even though the Bush administration cleared him for release in 2007, Obama reportedly cleared him in 2010, and the UK government has been requesting his release for five years. Help us bring this injustice to an end. Please sign the e-petition to demand his release.

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SUPPORTED BY:
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❑ **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

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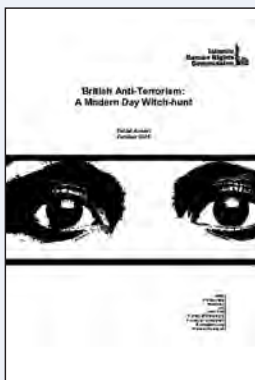
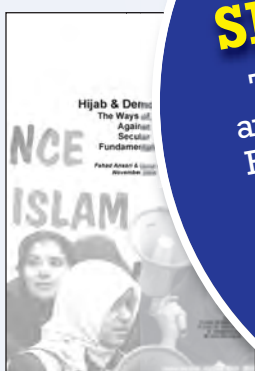
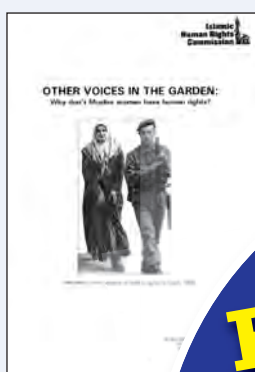
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