

The Long View

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Through the Looking Glass:

Searching for Justice

Sahib Mustaqim Bleher
Je Suis – We Are All
Palestinians: Lessons From
the Propaganda War

Imam Muhammad al-Asi
Liberating Holy Land North
and South: Decolonising the
Muslim Mind

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Demir Mahmutćehajić
Bosnia and Herzegovina:
Why Genocide Denial and
Genocide Awareness
Matter

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

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Cover image: 'In Heaven We Fly' by
Nasreen Shaikh Jamal al-Lail, using
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16th Group, Gaza.

As we witness the latest round of Israeli war crimes unfolding before our eyes on live streams and TV we could be excused for feeling a demoralising sense of detached helplessness from the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Palestine. The horrific scenes of civilians being targeted as they sleep in their homes or seek shelter in the open air evoke many emotions in us ranging from sadness to anger to disbelief. As the survivors scabble through the rubble of their pulverised residences we scabble through the maelstrom of these emotions searching for an adequate response. Our difficulty is compounded by the constant bombardment of propaganda from pro-Israel media outlets.

The media coverage is straight out of George Orwell's 1984 in which the omnipotent Party has total control over the levers of information production and uses them to write and rewrite history. "The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became the truth... And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed - if all records told the same tale - then the lie passed into history and became the truth", wrote Orwell. This imaginary dystopian future is our present. To scare us into accepting mistruths, most mainstream media has sought to vilify the Palestinians and delegitimise their resistance. Whether it's by propagating unsubstantiated (and now widely discredited) claims, the aim is to sanitise the Israeli carpet bombing of one of the most densely populated areas of the world.

Gaza has become a human slaughterhouse and yet the justifications of wanton violence continue to bellow out from the so-called civilised world. It is in this perverse media reaction that the writer of our headline piece, **Sahib Mustaqim Bleher**, locates the response required from Muslims. He lauds social media for providing an essential counterweight to the MSM narrative. Drawing on the seerah of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) he underlines the importance of the spoken and written word in demolishing lies and appealing to audiences - the Prophet famously employed the poet Hasan ibn Thabit to this end. According to Bleher our role as people in the West and as Muslims is to challenge the government controlled dominant discourse replete as it is with loaded terms and slogans, all designed to prevent people from taking control over their own destiny.

He writes: "Upon listening to orators from Najd, the Prophet Muhammad, peace be with him, said "Some expressions have magic in them". He was talking about the eloquence of words which can carry their audience. As Muslims, we need to free ourselves from the magicians' tricks (media deception) of the Pharaoh system, demolish them, like Moses did, by making them vanish in front of the eyes of the beholders..."

Our second contribution by **Imam Muhammad al-Asi** continues with the theme of learning from our history to understand that the liberation of the Holy Land, and by extension the freedom of the Palestinians, will not be achieved without first defeating the enemy within. By this he means the Arab regimes who are allied whether formally or informally with the state of Israel and its western overlords. It is not just the Holy Land that is colonised. Makkah and Medina are also colonised. Imam Asi says that before the Prophet (pbuh) even dealt with the duplicitous Banu Israel he had to deal with the hypocrites in the ranks of the Muslim community. The abandonment of the Palestinians and al-Quds by the Arab regimes speaks to the truth of the continuation of this historic treachery

which has never totally disappeared from the Arabs.

We must reorient our struggle on the concept of justice. "If we cannot re-centre our colonised mindsets on the issue of justice, there will be no liberation neither of Holy Land South or North", writes Imam Asi. This is the Prophetic method," he writes.

Wars against Muslims are not limited to the physical realm. Increasingly they have become the target of culture wars by which they are otherised in order to shape public opinion to accept differential treatment and violence against them, according to the third piece in this issue by **Saeed Khan**. "The culture wars that affect so many countries may best be understood and approached as manifestations of perpetual war, the need to scapegoat, demonize and marginalize social issues that are then associated, almost exclusively, with a particular, suspect group," he writes.

The piece sets out the stall for this year's Islamophobia conference organised by IHRC and SACC. The issue of immigration, highlights the modus operandi of the culture war protagonists. Muslims are blamed for importing values that are antagonistic to those of the 'native' inhabitants and dilutive of their way of life. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the treatment of Ukrainian refugees by European governments at the same time that many have acquiesced and even participated in the drowning of refugees from Africa and Asia in the Mediterranean.

As these debates play out it is impossible for Muslims not to engage but that is not without its own pitfalls. Khan grapples with the question of where Muslims should position themselves when their values don't neatly slot into any left or right wing paradigms.

Our final article in this issue is a real life manifestation of the horrific future that lies at the end of dehumanisation. As the Israeli hasbara, aided and abetted by its warmongering western media allies, whitewashes war crimes, Bosnia stands as a living example of a country still haunted by the memories of genocide where denial of history poisons politics and keeps its residents just a trigger pull away from a new genocide. **Demir Mahmutćehajić**, a refugee from the war, recounts how there were ten genocides before the war of 1992-95 that were not recorded. This was the background to the eleventh genocide that started in 1992 and ended in 1995. In the first few months of war, from April to June/July 1992, Serb forces set up concentration camps, torture chambers and rape houses. Over 60,000 women were raped. It was systematic and organised. Hundreds of thousands of people were placed in concentration camps, waiting for their turn to be killed. The reason why many survived is because the camps were discovered by activists and journalists.

And yet the International War Crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia tried individuals for war crimes against the precedent set at Nuremberg. This failure to indict governments and institutions, he claims, has allowed the Serbian authorities to perpetuate the same irredentist and dehumanising narratives that led to the 1992-95 genocide.

Seeing the issues of injustice we face through a different lens is not only desirable, but essential if we are to find any way to resolve the manifold problems, violence and oppression that we face daily. This does not require the seer to be Muslim, but simply requires one to see afresh and anew. We hope this issue assists.

Join the conversation by emailing us on info@ihrc.org, tweeting [@ihrc](https://twitter.com/ihrc) or find us on Facebook. We now also record podcasts and videos called The Long View Conversations looking into the deeper issues raised by multiple essays with some of our authors. You can find these at www.ihrc.org.uk/video-multimedia/ We are now also recording some of our essays so you can listen to them on the go. Find them in the same section.

Je Suis – We Are All Palestinians: Lessons From the Propaganda War

Sahib Mustaqim Bleher calls on Muslims and all those of good conscience, to move beyond the framing of Palestine as dictated by the mainstream westernised media, as both individuals and societies.

“Historic break-out from Gaza concentration camp - prison guards taken hostage.

“Jointly, Arabs in the Gaza and West Bank concentration camps and the Jerusalem ghetto number about six million, and Israel is contemplating a final solution to the demographic problem.

“Meanwhile, Abbas, senior Kapo at the West Bank concentration camp, said he had to express sympathy with the escapees or they might also come for him.”

“Russia-Ukraine conflict: Ukraine ambassador summoned over civilian deaths on Russian soil. Russia’s right to defend itself against attacks on its civilians and infrastructure must be upheld.”

You will immediately recognise that the above “news reports” are parodies rather than real news headlines from be it Western or Arab media. When it comes to reporting on the Middle East, the BBC, CNN, TRT or Al Jazeera only differ in flavour but retain the same ingredients. A clear indicator that all of us have been subjected to decades of propaganda where reporting means taking sides and dissident voices are largely absent, confirming the observation of Aeschylus of ancient Greece, reputed numerous times and ascribed to different people since, that “in war, the first casualty is truth.”

The war between Israel and Gaza / Palestine did not start on October 7 this year. However, it is the first time, that Israeli prime minister Netanyahu declared a war, deviating from the usual rhetoric of “going after terrorists”.

After some reporters succumbed to reprimands from IDF spokespersons and an overzealous (brown sahib/auntie Tom) home secretary for calling Hamas fighters “militants” when they were “mindless barbaric terrorists”, the BBC’s John Simpson tried his hand at damage control: “Why the BBC doesn’t call Hamas militants terrorists” (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67083432>), explaining that terrorism is a loaded word which conflicts with the BBC’s cherished impartiality even though the government proscribes Hamas as a terrorist organisation – multiple layers of

misinformation as usual by which history is continuously being rewritten to suit policy objectives. For a start, the British Propaganda Corporation was never impartial; it is a government mouthpiece.

Almost two decades ago, in 2006, the USA as part of its endless failed “peace initiatives” insisted on and financed elections in the Gaza strip. The people of Gaza elected Hamas. Since Hamas refused conditions imposed on it, such as recognition of the state of Israel’s right to exist (as a separate Jewish apartheid state), Israel and its US ally cancelled the will of the people and declared Hamas a terrorist organisation. Gaza has been without a government since, but in democratic terms Hamas is a state actor. Netanyahu’s declaration of war recognises this once again and turns Hamas fighters into neither militants nor terrorists but combatants, since under international law a war is fought between two armies (the “war on terror” is another propagandistic phrase without any substance in law).

Given the two sides are now at war, the rules of war under international law apply, and Israel is clearly guilty of war crimes under the 1949 Geneva Convention ratified by all member states of the UN (<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml>). Amongst the crimes defined as “war crimes” which Israel violated are:

- Wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health
- Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly
Furthermore, Israel violated what the convention lists as “Other serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict, within the established framework of international law”, amongst them:
- Intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities
- Intentionally directing attacks against civilian objects, that is, objects which are not military objectives
- Intentionally launching an attack in the

knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated

- The transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, or the deportation or transfer of all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory

- Intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not military objectives

- Intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions

Cutting off electricity and water supplies, starving the population, damaging civil infrastructure, preventing humanitarian aid from entering, the use of phosphorus bombs, etc. are all war crimes. Having been the occupying power for several decades compounds Israel’s criminal guilt.

Of course, Israel, backed by the USA and its Western allies or dependencies, has a long record of ignoring international law and UN resolutions. Now, instead of merely crying crocodile’s tears, Western governments and media have come out in open support of the war criminal, thereby becoming guilty parties themselves. To deflect from their complicity, they try to turn the focus on the killing of “innocent civilians” by Hamas in Israel during their “unprovoked attack” (which in the Ukrainian context would have been called a “counter-offensive” against invaders and oppressors of countless years). There were even stories, by now retracted and discredited, of beheaded children, comparable to the babies dying in the now infamous Kuwaiti incubators at the start of the Iraq war.

Unlike in Gaza, where joining the Hamas armed wing is by choice, every adult Israeli,

barring a few exceptions, is a reservist who completed military service (and is now being called up). Thus, unlike in Gaza, there are no adult “innocent civilians” in Israel.

The Hamas counter-offensive took the world by surprise. Nobody expected a “Sobibor” uprising in the Gaza concentration camp. It was business as usual: leave the people of Gaza to rot until the day they can be made to leave entirely. For Israel’s war cabinet, this day has now come.

The preparations and tactics of Hamas on October 7 tick all the boxes of textbook military strategy. Far from being a spent force, the armed wing of Hamas proved itself to be a formidable enemy, inflicting a high level of casualties on the other side and disabling its command-and-control structure at the border for some considerable time. However, it failed in its lack of perception of the necessity of also winning the propaganda war. Of course, the positions of US-allied governments and media would never have been any different, but to sustain the initial surprise advantage, Hamas would have relied on additional fronts opening up by Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq or others getting involved. So far, this has not happened. It appears that Hamas miscalculated that Arab/Muslim governments would rejoice at the well managed break-out of Gaza and finally support the Palestinian struggle now that the chance offered itself to them. This would have been a dangerous delusion. Arab governments love the material rewards which come from being subservient to Western powers; they pay lip service to the Palestinian cause and will not act unless forced to by their own populations. Likewise, Western governments will not care about law and humanity unless forced by their respective populations. This is where the battle for the minds of the people becomes hugely important. As long as the truth can be concealed through mass media manipulation, popular outrage will not be sufficient to force governments to change tune.

What is different now from, for example, the days of the first intifada, is the existence of social media. State propaganda cannot afford dissenting voices. Social media, which was designed to get individuals hooked to

their devices in order to make monitoring their discourse and movements easy, has become a poisoned chalice in that they are alternative sources of information which are, in spite of massive efforts of “fact checking” alleged “fake news”, usually more trusted than the discredited mainstream media. Having sided with the oppressors, Western governments also have to turn more oppressive against their own populations (something their Arab and other ex-colonial allies could teach them well), and calls for censorship have increased to an unprecedented level, shutting down numerous channels not sanctioned by the official narrative. This method was first tried during the Ukraine war by blocking out news feeds from RT as “violating local laws”, and overall, people did not seem to be too bothered by this creeping cancellation of “freedom of speech”. Impressively, Telegram withstood the pressure and refused to cancel the official Hamas telegram channel, arguing that it was subscriber-based only and would therefore not supply unpalatable information to readers who did not want to obtain it but, on the other hand, would save lives by giving access to information about Hamas’ intended targets.

Unfortunately, whilst a valuable source of first-hand information, the channel was not professionally run by people who understand the art of using the right word at the right time, also referred to as propaganda. The language used by Hamas to report its victories, decry its losses and challenge the enemy recalled that found in publications of the Social Workers Party prior to the demise of the Soviet Union.

In war, language is used to discredit, demolish and ridicule the enemy. Surah al-Lahab is an example from the Qur’an. Prophet Muhammad, peace be with him, employed the poet Hasan ibn Thabit to this end. He knew that the propaganda war must be won by using the best resources available.

Notwithstanding this failure, the propaganda war is also being won in favour of Palestinians simply due to the self-delusory arrogance of the other side. You cannot successfully legislate against the truth. The

truth is, as the philosopher Fichte put it, like a light, even a shimmer of it removes all darkness. Or in Surah al-Isra’ in the Qur’an:

And say: the truth has come and falsehood has vanished, for falsehood always vanishes. (ayah 81).

To fight the truth, governments who have now openly sided with falsehood and oppression, must become ever more oppressive. In support of Israel, they must become like Israel, and there will be conflict. France, Germany and Britain tried to stop their citizens from demonstrating in support of Gaza and failed. Arab governments, aware of their precarious situation especially after more recent attempts to make “peace” with Israel, will need to encourage their citizens to show support for Palestine, else they will be equated with the Israeli oppressors, weakening their internal support. This in turn, forces them to distance themselves from Western governments who have come out in support of Israel, whilst those Western governments are their only protection against their own people. The political landscape has irreversibly changed. Replacing the blue and yellow flag of Ukraine with the blue and white flag of Israel only demonstrates that the West no longer has staying power and is ready to abandon any cause due to overreach.

It is the people who must carry this struggle forward. People both in the West and in the Muslim world must challenge their governments and force them to show their hand even more. To do so, they must break through the sound barrier of controlled media discourse. For too long have we accepted and mistaken propaganda as the real thing, with mantras such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, the two-state solution, the free world, the international community, all meaningless slogans to prevent people from taking control over their own destiny.

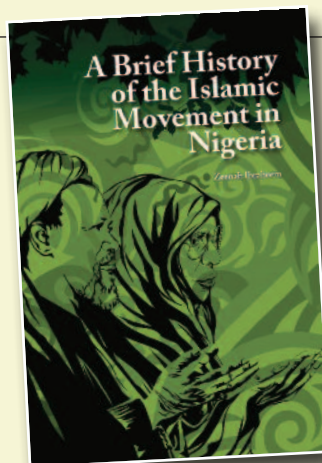
The reality is that Israel is an ideological colonial state imposed on the region, which practices apartheid. If a thug enters your house, locks you up in the basement and enjoys all that your property has to offer, an eventual agreement on a two-room solution

NEW PUBLICATION

A Brief History of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria

By Zeenah Ibrahim

Available from shop.ihrc.org



As a senior member of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Zeenah Ibraheem's history of it is a first-hand account, not just of its ideas, and their fruition, but some of the many turmoils and persecutions it has faced in the last four decades.

This book covers some of the key incidents in the movement's history, including the Funtua Declaration, as well as the Zaria Massacres of 2014 and 2015.

in which you will occasionally be allowed to receive food and shopping items in return for signing your house over to the usurper is not justice. It was empty words from the start, but thankfully now the “two-state solution” is off the table. The “international community”, a fancy term for Israel supporters denying freedom to anybody who does not choose to agree with them, will have to come to realise that they may dream to own the world, but they do not. They also backed the South African apartheid regime against the Soweto uprising but the more brutal the oppression, the nearer its end.

Upon listening to orators from Najd, the prophet Muhammad, peace be with him, said “Some expressions have magic in them”. He was talking about the eloquence of words which can carry their audience. As Muslims, we need to free ourselves from the magicians’ tricks (media deception) of the Pharaoh system, demolish them, like Moses did, by making them vanish in front of the eyes of the beholders, in other words, expose them for the lies they are, and employ the magic of powerfully crafted words to convey our own beautiful and clear message.

The events of this month have shown that Israel is anything but invincible and that it will not be saved by its technology. In fact, its survival to date is entirely due to the complicity of the Arab states encircling it. When the Arab League imposed an embargo of Israel in 1977, they prevented Muslims from visiting Masjid al-Aqsa and cut off the connection Muslims all over the world had with Palestine. If instead the millions of pilgrims at Hajj had been encouraged to include Jerusalem as a stop on their journey, Israel might have been forced much earlier to turn itself into a proper state where all its residents, Jewish, Christian or Arab, have equal rights. Even today, the USA is using its military bases in Arab countries to transfer military hardware intended to maim and kill Palestinians to Israel.

Muslim leaders will do well to study both their own history and that of their adversaries, together with Western dialectics, in order to free their people from the spell of the dominant narrative and its incessant lies to conquer the minds. I don’t know if it can be

purely put down to ignorance, but most lists of prophets published by Muslims which give their Biblical equivalents leave the name of Shu’aib, peace be with him, untranslated. He was, of course, Jethro. Does it matter? It matters a lot, because it demolishes the Jewish claim to their ancestral home as preceding that of the Arabs. Jethro/Shu’aib was the Arab father-in-law of Moses, peace be with him, the founder of Judaism, who gave him refuge when on the run from Pharaoh and from whom he learned his religion.

For too long have we trusted Western science (including historical sciences) to be “scientific”, meaning factual, value-neutral and evidence-based. It is anything but that. It is an ideological means of shaping the world. In trying to live up to the expectations of our masters, we have neglected and forgotten our own sciences and history. We hardly ever dared to attack the premises on which the secular world order was established. When holding on to elements of the truth of Islam, we did so apologetically, almost as if we defended the right to be irrational. The geopolitical situation of the Middle East has changed markedly, the ideological landscape also has to change.

Whether Hamas won a battle but lost the war in the short-term or whether, thanks to some foresighted Arab entity joining the cause just in time, the war will expand, it must eventually be won. We know it will. And increasingly we find governments East and West pitched against their own people. The world order will change, and it will not simply be a remodelling of the old order which has shown signs of cracking for a long time.

We live in an age of information overload and the inability of most people to distinguish truth from falsehood. This includes the masses of Muslims. As foretold by the prophet, peace be with him, the majority of them will also follow the Dajjal. But as Allah says: “How often did a small group overcome a big group with Allah’s permission – Allah is with those who are steadfast.” (Surah al-Baqarah, ayah 249). Who is going to be on the right side of history?

Allah says: “And what is the matter with

you that you do not fight in the way of Allah and for the weak amongst the men and women and children who say: our Lord, take us out from this town of wrongdoing people and assign us a protector from You and assign us a helper from You? Those who believe fight in the way of Allah, and those who reject (the truth) fight in the way of the idols, so fight the allies of the evil one, for the plot of the devil is weak.” (Surah an-Nisa’, ayat 75-76).”

There was one noticeable change in the language of the Hamas leadership: when they realised that once again they had been let down and abandoned by their perceived allies, they brought down Allah’s curse on them declaring “to the people and governments of the Muslims – may Allah not forgive you!” No more excuses. No longer the excuse that “we did not know” or “our leaders did not allow us to”.

Amidst the confusion of today’s world, most people have neither the leisure nor capacity to study. Attention spans are short. We live in the age of sound bites. This is where slogans take on disproportional importance. Muslim intellectuals who have studied must devise and disseminate such slogans to the Muslim and non-Muslim masses. In other words, we must reclaim the discourse about how things that concern us and matter to us are perceived and must stop letting our detractors dominate our minds and conversations.

Sahib Mustaqim Bleher

was a founder member of the Islamic Party of Britain and served as its general secretary and education spokesman as well as editor of the party magazine ‘Common Sense’. He is a professor of applied linguistics and translation and works as a commercial translator and interpreter through his own translation company in the UK. He is a member of Chartered Institute of Linguists and of the Chartered Institute of Journalists in the UK. Amongst his work are the adaptations of the Qur’an translations of Muhammad Pickthall and Yusuf Ali into modern English and his own Qur’an translation into “plain English”, all published by IDCI in Birmingham.

British Muslims’ Expectations of the Government (BMEG)

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- Volume 2
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Liberating Holy Land North and South: Decolonising the Muslim Mind

Imam Muhammad al-Asi contends that the characteristics of Bani Israel as outlined extensively in the Qur'an, are to be found in the Muslim mind, psyche and collective action. Understanding this is key to liberating not just the Holy Land but for the establishment of justice for all peoples, but to liberating the minds of all those struggling for freedom and justice, particularly Muslims

This piece speaks specifically to Muslims in certain sections. If you don't share the Islamic world view or the Islamic faith, it is alright. You can get a little insight into the internal affairs of the Muslims. I start with a fairly uncontentious assertion: that among the two billion Muslims in the world, is the belief that Zionist Israel must and is coming to an end. No two Muslims would disagree on that. There has been in the past ten or twenty years a crust: a very thin layer of politicians, who are trying to turn Muslim thinking on this. Just as you have Zionist Jews and Zionist Christians, we are now beginning to have, just there at the upper crust of governments, Zionist Muslims. Take them out of the equation. The two billion Muslims in the world consider Zionist Israel thus: racist Israel; exclusivist Israel; oppressive Israel; colonising Israel; expansionist Israel. They consider it to be an enemy.

The question that has been raised since 1948 remains the same: how do you undo that enemy? There were rushes to war - in 1948 to begin with then 1956, 1967, 1973. These were the governmental officials in Arabic speaking countries that went to war with the Zionist Israeli military establishment. For all practical purposes, they lost all

those wars. Regarding the 1973 war, they tried to say that they did not lose it. In effect: "You may have not scored a resounding victory, but we did not lose." But the fact of the matter is that they did lose.

So why did they lose? They have a combined armed force which miniaturised the Israeli one. As far as technology is concerned, Israel has the edge in military technology but in every other sense they had military superiority and yet still they lost. If I were to answer that as a material person as opposed to a moral person I would say because the combined armed forces that went to war against the Israelis did not have advanced weaponry. They were fighting with obsolete fighter jets, tanks, artillery, etc. - second and third generation weaponry. Meanwhile, the Israelis were fighting with state-of-the-art military technology. But if I was a moral person trying to answer the question of why did those who were against Israel lose, well what I have to say will strike you as odd. [44:38]. It is because those who fought against Israel were Israelis themselves. I know this strikes one as odd: how can this be said let alone make sense: they were / are not Israelis; they don't have citizenship; they are not Jews; they are not Zionists. How can one say that they are

Israelis?

I say that they are Israelis, understanding the character, the behaviour of people, not their rituals or their legalistic context or things like that. But who are they in essence? The Arabs who fought against the Israelis are Israelis in the understanding of the verses of the Qur'an about Israelis - the Bani Israail.

So what are some of the verses in the Quran that discloses an Israeli character? One of the verses of the Quran says:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا
كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا ۗ

(Surah Al-Jumu'ah, ayah 5)

That means, 'the similitude/ the analogy of those who were responsible for the Tawrah, or who were laden with the responsibilities of Tawrah, are equivalent to a donkey that is carrying books.' This is in reference to the Israeli character. Allah had/s given them the responsibility of the Torah, and they side-lined all of those responsibilities. They kept to, not the substance of the Torah, but the appearance of

ON OFFER

Political Islamophobia at American Policy Institutes: Battling the Power of Islamic Resistance

by Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria

Available from shop.ihrc.org and amazon.co.uk.



Looking at the RAND corporation, the Brookings Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Saghaye-Biria overviews these three think tanks' obsession with Islam and Muslims since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. She discusses the implications for Muslim societies of the direction of travel proposed.

Hakimeh Saghaye-Biria

is an Assistant Professor at University of Tehran, Faculty of Islamic Knowledge and Thought.

the Tawrah. The Tawrah has become a burden to them, and they want to find a way out of carrying the heavy load of the Tawrah.

Isn't this what has happened to those in our time who say that they are Muslims? Don't they have Islamic responsibilities to carry? But they're not carrying those responsibilities. That's an Israeli attitude. You can give yourself an Islamic name. You can dress as an Islamic person. You can have all the imagery of a Muslim. But in yourself, in your heart you are not.

Allah says to the Israelis,

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي
أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أَوْفٍ
بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ

(Surah Baqarah, ayah 40)

Allah says to the Israelis - Israelis as a behaviour, not Israelis as a race - don't let the racist understanding of words and things and developments and history penetrate your mind - Allah says to them,

'Honour your pledge with me, and I will honour my pledge with you and stand in awe of Me'.

They didn't honour their pledge with Allah. He didn't honour their pledge with them. And they didn't stand in awe of Him, awe meaning He wasn't their primary source of fear. Isn't this what is happening to the Muslims?

اتَّامُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

(Surah Baqarah, ayah 44)

You who have this attitude, whether it is on the Israeli side or on the Muslim side, or for that matter, the Christian side: are you demanding basic truths? Are you demanding freedom from all other people, and you are

excluding yourselves from that responsibility while you are reading the scripture that has come to you from the Almighty? Does this apply only to those who have a Jewish history? Or does it also apply to those who have a Christian history and to those who have a Muslim history?

So let's not say we are very different from the Israelis because Israelis, they established a nation state. That's a sanitized way of saying a racist state. The Israelis established a racist state. Wrong. The Muslims established 56 or 57 nation states and racist states because everything that goes with the exclusivity or exclusionism of nationalism and racism is an appellation of a nation state. We Muslims have 56 or 57 of those. Those who call themselves Jews, have one. I think we are more Zionist than they are.

So, are we fighting our own selves? We say that they are Israelis, and we can't discover that we are also Israelis, and we want to fight against them? The Israelis discriminate against Palestinians. Fact. Whatever frame of mind that you have, that's a fact. Speak to the Kurds. Kurds are Muslims, and ask them how they are treated by the nation states that they live in? They will tell you they are being treated just like the Palestinians are treated by the Israelis. So, why can we not look at the behaviour, the essence of human beings and not look skin deep? What is the colour of that person's skin? What type of blood runs in his veins? These types of things represent the Israeli mindset that we all share.

Then we want to speak about liberating Palestine and liberating other areas of the world when we don't have the qualifications necessary to do that. There are so many things involved here.

Addiction – An Example

We have in the Quran, *nasikh* and *mansookh*. We have verses in the Quran that override other verses, meaning the initial verses that were revealed were meant for a temporary condition out of which there is an evolution into a better condition. And so, the

previous verses that related to a condition of the past are superceded by the new verses. The question is why did these verses, these initial verses that dealt with an initial issue, why did they stay in the Quran? They are still there for all of us to read and understand and apply.

To give an example, the problem of addiction is a real problem, and it is hard to get rid of addiction. There are programs, there are methodologies, there are therapies, there are so many things to try to free a person or society of addiction. This is a problem that is not a moderate problem. This problem has been with people since way back and it was a problem when the Qur'an was revealed.

But the solution to this problem was not to tell Muslims - because Muslims cannot consume any addictive substances of whatever type - that we are forbidden from that. The verse from on high was not revealed suddenly to say: you who have become Muslims, you cannot consume any addictive substance from this moment onwards. That was not the way it was dealt with. There was a gradual phasing out of addiction. Until after months and years, Islamic society in Medina was up and running and was alcohol free: barrels of intoxicants were thrown away. But it took time to do that.

Understanding that, if in today's world someone wants to become a Muslim, and the person has been drinking and smoking and has been addicted to a lot of stuff for many, many years - what do you tell them? To be a Muslim you have to stop drinking immediately, go cold turkey, in order to become a Muslim? Or you take into consideration that this is going to take time. He has to gradually free himself of these bad habits. This point takes us to another area.

In the first 13 years of the Prophet Muhammad's life (peace and blessing be upon him), he was in Makkah, receiving revealed verses from Allah and trying to communicate and explain those meanings to the people. In those 13 years, there was no verse, there was no ayah that explained any ritual, for example As-Salah, As-Siyam, Az-Zakat, etc. None of those ayahs dealt with that. None of those ayahs dealt with any laws. So, for 13

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years, we didn't have any rituals and we didn't have any laws. So what was the Prophet trying to explain during those 13 years?

In the end, the simple answer to that was one thing: justice. Yet today, justice is excluded from the public mind. Go to any country, listen to any ideology or political platform, and you're lucky to hear the word justice mentioned once or twice in an election season. They will talk about so many things, but no one wants to centralise the issue of justice. The Prophet (pbuh) was not talking about *any* justice. Anyone can say they know justice, but whose definition of justice? Is it some philosopher? Is it some deep thinker? Is it some politician? Who is it that is going to tell me what justice means? And social justice? Who's going to define that for me?

The Prophet was receiving verses from Allah to tell the people that justice is defined by Allah. He is the only one who has a combined divinity and authority to tell us what justice is and how to maintain justice and achieve social justice. And those who opposed him began bickering. Remember, the opposition to the Prophet from those vested in the old oppressive order was very serious. Persecution, excommunication, forcing people who accepted this divine message to leave, to go to Africa for shelter and refuge. This is the core of the revelation and the work of the Prophet (pbuh) from the beginning of his mission, but when was the last time we heard a Friday sermon or a lecture at an Islamic conference that concentrated on the issue of justice and social justice? Not often, I hazard. The reason being that if there is a focus on that, then all of these constructs of racism and classism and genderism, in effect everything holding up the oppressive systems that we live in today are going to come down collapsing because justice is being done.

Liberating the Holy Lands

In talking about Palestine as the Holy Land, we often forget that this is not the only holy land under occupation. We also have the holy lands of Makkah and Medina that are colonised. The question becomes, should we

concentrate on liberating Holy Land South, the Arabian Peninsula? Or should we concentrate on liberating Holy Land North, which is the Levant?

Once again, we find the answer from Allah (Azza wa Ja'ala): it says in these first ayahs of Surah al-Isra,

فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعَدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسْتَوْأُجُوهُكُمْ
وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ
وَلِيَنْبُرُوا مَا عَلَوُا تَنْبِيرًا

(Surah Isra, ayah 7)

These verses tell us that the first time that Bani Israel lost their status as the number one hegemon in the world was at the hands of, in the words of the Quran "Ibaadan lanaa", (Sura Isra' -verse 4), subordinates, specifically belonging to Us, to divinity.

They don't belong to a superpower. They don't belong to a man-made philosophy. They specifically and emphatically belong to Allah - that's how the first line, the first chapter, the first era in which Banu Israel had control over the noble world of that time, their attempts to eliminate the last four apostles or messengers of Allah.

So, the first time Banu Israel came down from their high status in the world was in the first generation of the prophet. They lost their influence in Al-Medina, in Khaybar, then in Al Quds, Jerusalem. They lost.

This is the area that escapes our attention. Was the Prophet more concerned with Bani Israel or was he more concerned with the enemies that came from his own people? He was concerned with his own people first. That's why Makkah was liberated before Jerusalem was liberated.

So the ayah says,

فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعَدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسْتَوْأُجُوهُكُمْ
وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ

(Surah Isra, ayah 7)

'And they will enter, they meaning 'Ibaadan lanaa'. The appetizer to this has been experienced by the Israeli losses to the Islamic resistance in Lebanon and the Israeli targeting of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic in Iran.

So the question is, is there enough acumen to understand that Makkah has to be liberated in order for Jerusalem to be liberated? The second time around has to be done the same way it was done the first time around.

Now, here's an interesting extension. After about 20 plus years of Makkan hostility towards the prophet in al-Medina, Makkah was finally liberated. What do I mean by Makkah being liberated? In the Arabic language, it is *Fath ul-Makkah*. It was militarily liberated. It was not psychologically liberated. And still, Makkah up until this day has not been psychologically liberated. This, in my opinion, would explain why the Prophet himself and the successors, the five legitimate successors to the Prophet, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Imam Ali, Imam Hassan remained in Al-Medina and did not go to Makkah. It is because, as I said, even though the Mushriks militarily lost in Makkah and ostensibly became Muslim, psychologically they did not become committed in the way the Prophet wanted them to become committed. They still had a grudge, or they still had traces of that animosity of 20 years of warfare against the Prophet.

Nevertheless, Makkah was physically liberated. It came under Islamic administration. And then, after that, the community of Bani Israel of that time that was living in Al-Medina, due to their high treason, no longer could live in Al-Medina. When they were living and coexisting with the others, everything was fine, but when they began to commit high treason and treachery against the Muslims, they lost their right to live in Al-Medina. So, most of them regrouped in Khaybar. Then, they were defeated in Khaybar. After that, they re-joined their others in the Holy Land, Al-Quds and its surround-



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ings. Then, Al-Quds and its surroundings were liberated. All of this was done by 'Ibaadan lanaa'. It was not done by Sunnis or Shiites. It was not done by Sufis or Salafis. It was not done by certain followers of a certain group. It was done by 'Ibaadan lanaa'.

And so, Allah says when a second time comes around, meaning when the Israeli power presence in the world, the second time comes around, they are going to be defeated by 'Ibaadan lanaa' once again.

So, when these Israeli types were defeated in the Arabian peninsula, both in Holy Land South, and in Holy Land North, along with them, who was also defeated? The Roman Empire, or what some historians would call Byzantium. They were also defeated in the battles of Mu'ta and Tabuk and Al-Quds. So, now we have three categories of power centres that were defeated: the Mushriks of Mecca, the Israelis of the Holy Land, South and North, and the Byzantines in the Holy Land North. They all suffered defeat. Do you think that they went home and hung their uniforms up and gave up? Or was there a desire or even a plan to get even? To get 'even' meaning with 'Ibaadan lanaa' - these Muslims.

So, now, there was a common purpose between the Arabian mushriks, who were now nominal Muslims, the Umawis who were ruling in Damascus, along with the Byzantines - Heraclias and his empire, along with Bani Israel. They had now become the enemy. However, the 'Ibaadan lanaa', those who had defeated them, the Prophet, Imam Ali, Umar ibn Al-Khattab had passed away.

So they put their forces together. They coordinated their policies because when King Muawiyah was ruling and he was losing to his extended cousin, Imam Ali, he sent communication to the ruler of Byzantine, saying, "if you are not going to cease your hostilities against me, then, since I am at war with my cousin, I can easily make up with him, and both of us will face you on the battlefield".

So, as the years went by, they consoli-

dated their forces. And what happened there was the revenge that these three power centres took against the committed Muslims in what is known as the battle of Karbala. That is how that happened. That is the explanation for that.

The problem is, because of the sectarian bunk, the infestation of sectarianism in the general Muslim mind, financed, by kingdoms and petrodollars, the Sunnis cannot see that Karbala is an extension of the battles that took place in which Banu Israel, Byzantium and the Mushriks aligned. They cannot make that connection.

The Shias cannot see that there was an introduction to Karbala and that these were the battles. Our inability to join these together is the fertile ground of sectarianism. We need to get that out of our minds. We need to stop thinking of this issue within that range and continue to be divided Muslims with issues that are silly [and] become argumentative, disputatious, and hostile. Listen to some of these preachers and speakers, financed by unlimited budgets, that come onto the screen, they never use the word justice. They don't speak about any issue that has to do with justice, as if those 13 years of the Prophet's life never existed.

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍ
بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ:
تَمَعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
يَقُولُ:

" بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا
إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامَ
الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ، وَحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ،
وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ ".
[رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ] ، [وَمُسْلِمٌ].

"(The structure of) Islam is built on five (pillars): Testification of 'La ilaha illallah' (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah), that Muhammad (pbuh) is his slave and Messenger, the establishment of Salat, the payment of Zakat, the pilgrimage to the House of Allah (Ka'bah), and Saum during the month of Ramadan."

The speakers we have to listen to today, preaching at us, say this is Islam.

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ

Islam was constructed on five things. Those five things are not Islam. Islam is constructed on them, but they are not Islam, but we have been so brainwashed, we have been so disconnected from reality that our definition of Islam has been drastically reduced into rituals and into some legalities, and those rituals and legalities came 13 years after a prolonged and an extended struggle. There are a lot of other things that should have been said but they need more time and more space. I am limited in knowledge, as we all are, and Allah (SWT) knows best.

I end with this. If we cannot re-centre our colonised mindsets on the issue of justice, there will be no liberation neither of Holy Land South or North. We need to set our psychologies free, the way Islam has always demanded us.

Imam Muhammad al-Asi

is currently working on the first-ever English Tafsir of the Qur'an titled: The Ascendant Qur'an: Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture. Imam Asi has also published a translation of the Qur'an. Both the tafseer volumes and translation are published by ICIT. Imam Asi is based in Washington D.C.

¹ Because at the time liquor was the main intoxicating substance



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Muslims and the Culture Wars: Antagonisms, Alliances and Ideological Considerations in a Complex Social Mosaic

Caught between the competing narratives of ever increasing toxicity, Muslims, according to **Saeed Khan** need to be wary of the pitfalls of choosing sides both built on ideas and philosophies that undermine Islamic thinking and aspirations.

The so-called “Culture Wars” are, arguably, as toxic and traumatizing as conflicts involving active combat and military involvement. They tend to divide societies along ideological, religious and political lines of demarcation. These wars often target minority groups as scapegoats and the cause for perceived social strife when the majority population feels anxiety over losing power or because they seek to test their power by asserting it against weaker communities.

Currently, there are manifestations of the culture wars at play in a host of countries, many in the West, but in some cases, spreading to other parts of the world as well. Muslim communities are sometimes designated as the enemy in culture wars of their respective locales, subjecting them to considerable marginalization, discrimination and in some cases, persecution and violence. Yet in other situations, Muslims, though not the direct targets of these processes, find themselves in the vexing position of whether to engage in these debates and social skirmishes. In doing so, they may have to take a stand alongside those with whom they share little ideological commonality, or with those that might seek to cause them harm outside the limited scope of their interaction on the issue at hand. Beyond the ideological quagmires is the question whether it is expedient to engage in the culture wars at all, especially if they don't directly concern the Muslim community. As the culture wars are pervasive and inescapable, Muslims are facing challenges in many places that are not of their doing, but also not allowing for the ability to avoid them.

The United States is currently in the midst of what is described by observers across the ideological spectrum as a series of culture wars. Depending upon the issue and the advocate, the manifestation of the “war” is framed as an existential threat to American society. Some of the more prominent ones involve gun control and the status of the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. It is, as are many of the culture wars, highly polarizing, with conservatives opposing any

limitation on their self-professed right to bear arms, irrespective of quantity or the rampant gun-related crimes that infect the country, especially with the incredulous number of mass murders where guns play a central role.

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Gun control in America is a cultural issue because Americans, especially gun enthusiasts, regard guns to be a crucial and defining aspect of American culture. It is, interestingly, an issue with which Muslims appear disinterested. While surveys indicate that Muslim Americans overwhelmingly favor reasonable restrictions on guns such as universal background checks and a ban on assault weapons, gun control does not register highly as an issue in which they take an identifiable role in advocacy or activism.

Like gun control, perhaps no single issue in America's culture wars has been as contentious, divisive or sustained as abortion. Since the landmark 1973 *Roe v Wade* decision where the US Supreme Court permitted abortion, subject to some limitations, especially after the point of fetal viability, women in the United States were assured of the notion that they enjoyed an important, constitutionally protected right. All that changed in the summer of 2022 when the Court held that women do not enjoy the fundamental

right to privacy which undergirded the protections granted by *Roe*. In *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Court's decision was the culmination of a fifty-year effort by anti-abortion forces to overturn *Roe*.

For Muslims in America, the abortion debate and recent judicial action has evoked both strong reactions as well as confusion. Many traditionally minded Muslims have lauded the *Dobbs* decision, arguing that abortion is *haram* and thus must be proscribed. For others, they take the position that, as with other progressive causes, greater permissibility preserves one's rights, given the always available option of self-regulation and choice to abstain from asserting such a right. Confusing the issue is the fact that oftentimes, and irrespective of the state where they may reside, the abortion legislation rarely comports exactly to Islamic tenets, which has neither a categorical prohibition nor an unchecked allowance. And as the abortion issue is well dominated by non-Muslim elements in American society, Muslims find themselves engaging with the issue, if they were so inclined to do so, with positions that are more extreme on either side of the divide than they might prefer.

Muslim Americans are sometimes dragged into the culture wars when they are utilized as convenient strawmen in the key public social debates. As conservative elements in the United States are behind promoting legislation designed to permit discrimination of people under the guise of religious freedom, particularly targeting members of the LGBTQ+ community, these same elements have been vociferous in charging Muslims as being the most homophobic segment of society. However, when Muslims take a prominent public position opposing LGBTQ+ related policies, conservative voices feign solidarity for them. For example, Muslim parents in Dearborn, Michigan, a city with the highest concentration of Arab Muslims in America, have protested the presence of books normalizing same-sex parents and other LGBTQ+ related subject matter in primary school libraries. Similarly, Muslim parents in Montgomery

County, Maryland, have lodged their opposition to the ability to opt out of certain curricular programming that teaches about LGBTQ+ matters as normal and acceptable. In both cases, opportunistic conservative politicians and media outlets have praised the Muslim parents for their activism. Of course, Muslim American attitudes on the LGBTQ+ issue are quite diverse. Among young Muslims, support for the LGBTQ+ community tends to mirror that of broader society. Imbued with a sense of social justice, they see the LGBTQ+ community as facing similar challenges of discrimination as Muslims in America and subscribe to the notion that coalition building is essential to combat hate and bigotry wherever it is directed.

The LGBTQ+ issue contentious on an intra-faith level as well. Within the American context, some liberal and progressive Muslim voices have objected to the increasingly vocal and public stance taken recently by well-known Muslim scholars. A letter titled "Navigating Differences" has been circulating via social media and other platforms as a response to various LGBTQ+ related incidents in the United States. The letter, signed by over two hundred prominent religious and community leaders, contends that Muslims have a constitutionally protected right to object to the purported imposition of LGBTQ+ values and materials, especially when they concern school-aged children. Under the pretence of an interpretation of the free exercise of religion clause of the US Constitution's First Amendment, the signatories argue that Muslims should not be compelled to be exposed to content that is antithetical to their religious teachings and, apparently, religious sensitivities. The timing of this letter appears to coincide with recent Supreme Court decisions affirming the rights of Christian business owners to refuse service to members of the LGBTQ+ community under similar religious objection grounds.

Muslim American voices that have lodged their own objections to the "Navigating Differences" scholars have chosen to do so based upon a series of issues. For some, it is an ideological one, that the posture taken

by the letter's authors and signatories erroneously implies that they speak for the broader Muslim community, many of whose members have differing opinions on engagement with and support for various LGBTQ+ issues. There is also concern and even anger that the letter is a myopic alignment, intentional or not, with the very conservative and right-wing elements of American society who express unambiguous and enthusiastic Islamophobia. These same elements express their enthusiasm and support for Hindutva, while demonizing Palestinians as perennial terrorists. Lastly, there is frustration and skepticism that this particular group of scholars chose to comment on the LGBTQ+ issue but have been silent on a host of other social issues, including racial discrimination, immigration, economic disparities and Islamophobia.

A popular area of contention and asserting difference between Muslim culture and American society is the treatment of women. Clearly, there are some serious challenges that confront the Muslim community, both in the United States and elsewhere vis-à-vis gender relations and the status of women. However, for Islamophobes, Muslims are the archetypal misogynists, sexists and chauvinists, to the point of being perpetually and perennially violent toward women. They raise the fear of the impressionable that greater Muslim civic and political empowerment will invariably lead to the subjugation of women in this country – not just Muslim, but all women. Islamophobes contend that the protection of women is a valuable and vital line in the sand to prevent Muslim societal intrusion. At closer examination, however, two points require delineation in the discourse surrounding this issue. The first is that similar to the debate over homosexuality, Islamophobes proffer examples of Muslim attitudes and conduct from outside the United States, not from Muslim-Americans. In addition, there is a remarkable similarity between conservative (non-Muslim) efforts to limit women's rights in the United States and the policies and attitudes of the very Muslim countries they cite as a threat of im-

pending Muslim influence in America.

Race often plays a factor in the culture wars. Xenophobia and bigotry otherizes people of colour where discrimination and hostility still present themselves through societal and/or state action. Recently, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the United States has gained prominence as a protest imperative against systemic racism. A series of killings of African Americans, either by individuals who seemingly acted out of racial prejudice or by law enforcement officials, evoked widespread condemnation among minority and left-leaning elements, especially when it appeared that justice was not fully served, with the perpetrators receiving little to no punishment. The 2020 murder of George Floyd, an African American by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota, garnered international publicity. The subsequent conviction of those involved affirmed and amplified the BLM Movement, propelling it into a global phenomenon. Demonstrations were held in many cities around the world, showing solidarity for Floyd, as well as highlighting the racist atmosphere in their own respective locales.

In the United States, the BLM movement became an amalgam of social justice causes, linking itself with both the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) effort and also the LGBTQ+ cause. This broadened coalition attracted a wider range of activists and advocates, some who may have begun their activism more parochially, but ultimately embracing and championing issues beyond their immediate area of focus. It is one of the reasons why a sizable number of Muslim Americans joined the BLM movement, attending and in some cases leading demonstrations in some US cities. They were able to show their support for the BDS movement as well as solidarity with the African American community, including that of Black-American Muslims, as well as bur-nishing their activist bona fides with support for LGBTQ+ matters. Again, as the BLM movement went global, so too did the expanded construct of causes and their supporters.



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Yet, the BLM movement was not without its critics. Some claimed that the BLM movement was a corporatized, bureaucratic and elitist structure that commodified and, in many ways, hijacked what had been at its inception an organic, grassroots imperative against racism that targeted Black Americans. In addition, it was argued by some Muslim voices that the BLM movement's integration with other social justice efforts was problematic as it demanded offering support for causes that purportedly ran counter to Islamic tenets and teachings, particularly the LGBTQ+ issue. While Black Lives Matter, per se, could and perhaps should be supported, it was contended, the broader BLM coalition ought to be avoided. For many activists, such an admonition was not well received, as they felt they were engaging appropriately in civic matters that concerned their own communities as well as reciprocating support for groups that had shown solidarity with Muslims.

While Muslims are generally at the periphery of the culture wars in the United States, they are the direct and stated enemy in many cultural debates throughout Europe. In part due to the colonial legacy and Europe's well-honed ethno-chauvinism and bigotry, Muslims endure hatred that is promulgated by both state and society. Much of this animus presents itself in systemic racism as well as attitudes toward immigration. Muslims are often blamed as bringing in an alien, antagonistic element into the European continent, an element seemingly antithetical to the purported values of the West. Recently, the enthusiastic welcome of Ukrainian refugees into the European Union (EU) and Great Britain due to the 2022 Russian invasion of their homeland stands in stark contrast to the hostility and draconian policies directed against Muslims and others of color seeking asylum from conflict and war.

In Great Britain and the EU, public engagement and coalition building is more elusive than it is in the American context. The default presumption among both the ideological left and right in Great Britain is that Muslims are unwilling or incapable of inte-

gration, irrespective of systemic and societal barriers to facilitate it. Rare is the occasion where a special interest group will either approach or champion the Muslim community on an issue regarding the so-called culture wars. On the left, there doesn't appear to be the impetus for non-Muslims to defend Muslims that are under siege by society or state action. In France, for example, the silence among liberal and progressive sectors is deafening and reflects an ironic though unsurprising alignment with the ideological right on this issue, albeit for different reasons. For the left, the hijab bans and erasure of Muslims from the public sphere is due to its insistence to uphold *laïcité*, as they object to religious expression of any kind, though far less strident in their objections about other faith communities. For the right, conventional xenophobia and racism are deployed in their targeting of visibly observant Muslim women, though strangely, wealthy Gulf Arab women appear to be exempted from scrutiny as they frequent expensive retail outlets in Paris while fully or partially veiled. Muslims are regarded as an existential threat to French society; for the left, it is for their alleged encroachment on secularism, for the right it is their encroachment on Gallic purity.

In France, a woman's modesty is apparently a cultural threat. Along with hijab and niqab bans, modest swimwear, i.e., the burkini has been banned. Right-wing political parties such as the National Rally (*Rassemblement National*, or RN, formerly the Front National) have resorted to enacting laws proscribing such apparel being worn in public. The RN has also targeted Muslim schoolchildren, the most vulnerable of an already vulnerable group, haranguing them by demanding schools notify the authorities in case any students took days off from attendance due to observance of Ramadan and/or Eid festivities. Banning the availability of halal meat in school canteens, blocking the construction or expansion of mosques, Islamic schools, even kebab shops are yet other examples of excluding Muslims from public spaces.

At the same time, it is important to rec-

ognize that societies may sometimes scapegoat a community while they are on the ascent in economic, military and/or geopolitical power. Nationalism, especially racial or religious nationalism, shapes the narrative to be one of exclusion, not inclusion, of the developing "success story." Those minorities that can be cleaved from the majority identity are ripe for disenfranchisement as they become an inconvenient and unnecessary component of the "new society," which operates from the conceit that the majority can and will succeed by itself. Such a project is underway, albeit in Asia, not Europe.

The spectre of culture wars is not limited to the West. The deteriorating condition for Muslims in India is in part framed within the language of culture. The institutionalization of *Hindutva*, a religio-chauvinistic nationalism, has gained considerable currency and depth over the past decade, particularly since the election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014. A concerted effort is underway to rewrite the narrative of India, a country that gained its independence in 1947 and that had maintained a delicate balance of secular pluralism among a highly diverse society. Recently, Muslim and Christian minorities have been targeted by rhetoric, policy and violence, both by civil society and by the state, which appears to be either reticent or endorsing of the former in its actions.

While Muslims have been part of Indian society, in some capacity or the other, for nearly 14 centuries, they are regarded as an invasive, alien force in the *Hindutva* narrative. As descendants of invaders, they are painted as being inauthentic as they are not indigenous to the land or, in the alternate, converts, forced or otherwise, from their original Hindu faith origin. *Hindutva* extremists offer Muslims two choices: "revert" back to Hinduism or leave India forever.

As with many culture war narratives, majoritarian purity is a common trope. *Hindutva* detests the purported mongrelization of Indian (read: Hindu) culture, irrespective of how diverse and vibrant it has made India. Inter-marriage, then, is seen as one of the

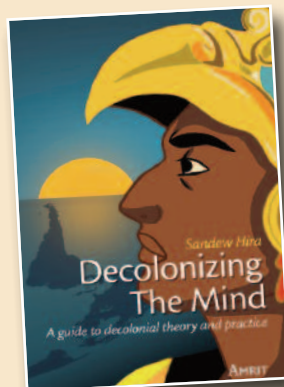
NEW FROM AMRIT PUBLISHERS

Decolonizing Mind - a guide to decolonial theory and practice

By Sandew Hira



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In different parts of the world a new decolonial movement is growing that challenges long time narratives in knowledge production and social struggle and transforms activism and social movements. It is driven by key factors such as the fall of the west and the rise of the rest, the collapse of the socialist bloc and in general the crisis of Western civilization.

Hira develops a comprehensive, coherent and integral theoretical framework that draws on different contributions in the decolonial movement, and deals with the practical implication of decolonial theory for decolonial activism.

most egregious forms of hybridization. Hindutva zealots frequently accuse Muslims of committing “love jihad,” the intentional mission of plying Hindu girls to form relationships with Muslim boys, ultimately allegedly forcing them convert to Islam to allow marriage to occur. This conceived protection of Hindu women and their honor is a common pretense invoked by cultural chauvinists, ironically so in the case of India, given the rampant rape rates in the country.

Another nefarious ploy to target Muslims in India is the accusation of beef consumption, permissible in Islam, but proscribed for most Hindus. Several Muslims have been lynched to death by so-called “cow vigilantes” that patrol the streets and attack Muslims, often without proof that they have in fact slaughtered a cow. Incidentally, India is one of the world’s largest beef exporters, with the major abattoirs Hindu owned. These details, inconvenient and hypocritical though they may be, are conveniently ignored within the broader culture wars mission to demonize Muslims.

Historical revisionism is underway to diminish or even erase Muslim cultural contribution to India. The music of Amir Khusrow, poetry of Mirza Ghalib, architecture of Taj Mahal and Qutb Minar are all under attack. We saw the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, under the pretense that it was erected on the site of the Lord Ram’s birthplace. Somehow, cultural modalities that not only contributed but also enhanced and defined Indian identity, are now considered inimical to Hindutva India. Christian communities are demonized, as the recent violence in the northeastern Indian town of Manipur demonstrates, because they are seen as the product of European colonizing forces.

Voices among all but a shockingly few in India, as in Europe and the US, are silent or tepid about the erosion of conditions for Muslims in society, and even those who appear to champion Muslim rights must be viewed with a certain modicum of skepticism as to whether they indeed support Muslims or are opportunistically exploiting their plight as a cudgel with which to bash their

political opponents. Which poses an interesting and important question: even if Muslims cannot rely upon others defending the violation of their civil rights and civil liberties, are they still obliged, religiously or socially, to defend the violation of such rights and liberties of others?

In many European countries, the political left has no record of championing Muslim communities, and in many scenarios, the left reveals the limits of its supposed tolerance as it frames Muslims as being inimical to their notions of liberal, secular values.

There are four options for Muslims’ involvement with the culture wars. Each brings with it a balancing act, weighing of costs and benefits for the choice taken, as well as an important presumption that there is no requirement that the community achieve a complete consensus on exercising a single option. Too often, aspersions of malintent and ignorance lead to unnecessary discord and division at a time when the culture wars already place Muslims in the line of fire of other forces and agendas.

Option 1: Align with the “Left”

Muslims may be attracted to aligning themselves with various left-leaning elements within their respective societies. In many cases, these entities tend to be inclusive of groups, especially those that are perceived to be marginalized, victimized and/or targeted by powerful forces of state or society. In

the United States, for example, when former President Trump announced and then enacted his so-called Muslim travel ban, suspending entry to the country from various Muslim majority countries, progressive and liberal organizations and individuals joined Muslims to protest the executive order, even facilitating lawsuits to challenge the President’s actions.

The political left also tends to avoid essentializing or stereotyping Muslims into a monolithic menace. Liberals and progressives defied the trend of perceiving Muslims as a security threat, *en masse*, whether after the 9/11 or 7/7 attacks, or other acts of extremism. At the same time, however, the political left may be reticent to link itself with Muslims, whom it feels are insufficiently liberal. In fact, so-called liberals may vilify Muslims for being too patriarchal, unsecular or anti-secular, too culturally traditional to the point of perceived intolerant to deserve their support.

Of course, a key factor that will dissuade Muslims from aligning with the left is that certain social and cultural positions that the left maintains may be antithetical to Islamic values and will cause consternation about whether alliance equals endorsement, normalization and legitimization of those perspectives. This is particularly evident in the current debates about sexual orientation and sexual identity. Such alignment may not be possible in every situation. In many European countries, the political left has no record of championing Muslim communities, and in many scenarios, the left reveals the limits of its supposed tolerance as it frames Muslims as being inimical to their notions of liberal, secular values. Liberal Islamophobia might be rhetorically gentler than its conservative counterpart and the legions of “Islamophobic warriors,” but it is no less racist and imperialist than the latter as it takes for granted the “white man’s burden” that serves as its impetus and soul cleansing mechanism. It trades candid hatred for patronizing insincerity.

Culture is a convenient battleground for societies to contest their structural fissures and flaws. It is exactly because culture is per-

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vasive; it is literally the landscape where societies act, interact, detract and counteract social processes and forces that affect these groups, on local, regional, national and international levels. Culture wars are defined and determined by those in power, often to serve as a deflection and distraction from how the powerful are performing, whether it sends society in a positive or negative trajectory. When societies are undergoing pressure or negative change, culture wars become a convenient way to allow those in power to evade blame and accountability for why the flaws are occurring. Rather than accepting responsibility or offering correctives, controversy is created for which people feel threatened and fearful, along with the inevitable and accompanying scapegoating of usually the most vulnerable and least responsible for the maladies underway. These are called moral panics, pervasive feelings of fear, often irrational, that some entity threatens the values, safety and welfare of a community, country or civilization.

It is noteworthy that whenever and wherever there has been social strain due to ineffective state policy or external pressures, an internal, already marginalized and usually a minority group becomes the easy target for the miseries being experienced. In the 1930s, with the collapse of Weimar Germany, the National Socialist (Nazi) Party was able to capitalize on the economic wasteland in the country by blaming Jewish financiers and then the Jewish community more broadly. Lost in the analysis was the impact of the Great Depression, emerging from the United States, or the crushingly punitive measures imposed on Germany in the aftermath of World War I by the Allied Powers in the Treaty of Versailles. Instead of directing their anger and frustration at France, Great Britain and others complicit in the degradation of German institutions, the Nazis capitalized on a proximate “Other,” irrespective of how integrated and contributory they may have been to German society.

Today, in many parts of the world, Muslims are the archetypal “Other.” Islamophobia is often deployed by the perceived “culture” of Islam being inimical to the cultural paradigm of the existing, often majority population in that locale. Depending on the whims of the majority society, Muslims are either the prime “Other” or secondary or tertiary alien, qua cultural threat. In any scenario, there is the assurance that Muslims are then *the* or *a* perennial problem – their cultural incompatibility is not only a nuisance, but also a danger.

Option 2: Align with the “Right”

While not themselves in the crosshairs of some current manifestations of the culture wars, Muslims may find those particular battlegrounds problematic from a theological perspective. Perhaps no issue exemplifies this tension more than the LGBTQ+ disputes, especially in western countries. The intensifi-

cation of the various debates on the topic, the perceived increased normalization and legitimization of the identity and behavior as well as the sense of its imposition upon society, especially on children as a required element of school curricula (even for children as young as six or seven years of age). For Muslims in countries like the United States, Canada and elsewhere, the contentious nature of the subject matter has led increasing numbers of the community to gravitate toward the political right, creating either an implicit or explicit alliance, to combat this trend. This approach might be seen as Muslims becoming civically engaged in their respective communities, demonstrating their role as stakeholders invested in how society should function. But the question remains as to whether the alignment with the right, even if justified as being limited to a single issue or two, is prudent given the ideological animus the right has shown, articulated and applied toward Muslims.

The well-established track record of right-wing hatred of Muslims may only briefly be suspended for an alliance of convenience; once the current issue is concluded, irrespective of the manner of its resolution, the right wing will resume their targeting of Muslims, perhaps even more so since their “distraction” issue is no longer present. Alliance with the right-wing also imperils existing relations with liberal groups, that may have asserted their support for Muslims in the past. In the American context, there is currently tension among some progressives that Muslim actions, seen as hostile toward the LGBTQ+ community, are an act of betrayal, whereby support among marginalized and targeted communities is not being reciprocated.

As with the case of the ideological left in Europe, the UK and elsewhere, Muslim alliance with the right wing may not even be a possibility to entertain. Conservative parties and entities do not court Muslims on cultural issues because they often scapegoat Muslims for being the cultural problem. Conservatives also don't require or desire Muslim alliances to combat additional manifestations of the cultural wars with which Muslims might share their perspectives. Thus, if Muslims want to oppose certain cultural developments, they will find themselves doing so in a parallel course to the conservative efforts.

Option 3: Work with Both Liberals and Conservatives

Muslims certainly have the ability to engage in the culture wars on an *ad hoc* basis by championing certain causes of concern to their communities, without essentializing whether they are “right” or “left” issues. This approach allows Muslims to carve out an independent, even balanced assessment of the cultural landscape and engage with it in a manner that most accurately reflects Islamic and Muslim sensitivities. As many cultural issues are so polarizing in the current discourse, Muslims can, in fact, take a centrist

or middle path in navigating the difficult debates.

While balance is certainly a prudent and practical path to take, a critical question to ask is whether Muslims should be involved at all in aspects of the culture wars that do not directly impact them. In some cases, Muslims are *the* cultural issue, but elsewhere, various social matters have gained primacy. As Muslims are a small, often beleaguered minority, an argument can be made that they resist the temptation and/or compulsion to join in conflicts not of their making.

Option 4: Disengage from the Culture Wars

Notwithstanding Muslims being centered as the prime “adversaries” in western culture wars, should Muslims participate in other cultural issues where they reside? One option available to them is to opt out, particularly if those specific manifestations of the culture wars are neither of their making nor directly linked to their own respective communities. There is a clear opportunity sit back and allow the major forces in those issues to bloody themselves and achieve whatever outcome occurs. Given the rather limited resources and social capital that many Muslim communities possess, perhaps disassociation is the most prudent alternative; after all, sometimes, it is possible not to take sides.

The culture wars that affect so many countries may best be understood and approached as manifestations of perpetual war, the need to scapegoat, demonize and marginalize social issues that are then associated, almost exclusively, with a particular, suspect group. In many countries, these social issues have sought to target Muslims as the causes of the conflicts in question or in some cases, the convenient strawman to be invoked as the public face of opposing what otherwise would be an acceptable social phenomenon. Muslims are right to engage in the culture wars where they have been designated as the cultural adversary, but as members and stakeholders of societies where they are not the agents or instigators of such conflicts, the question of whether they should become participants in the proverbial battlefield is more complex. Whether to engage or disengage is made more complicated and vexing with the quagmire of aligning themselves with others based on ideological compatibility on that particular issue. Tactical concerns must be acknowledged and juxtaposed to strategic realities in taking a course of action on an ever evolving and mutating battlefield.

Saeed Khan

is Professor of Near East & Asian Studies & Global Studies and Director of Global Studies at Wayne State University, Detroit, USA. He will be co-chairing the 2023 IHRC Islamophobia Conference, in December, on this topic. His most recent publications include “What's Going on Here? US Experiences of Islamophobia between Obama and Trump”, co-authored with Saied R. Ameli for Islamic Human Rights Commission publications.



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Bosnia and Herzegovina: Why Genocide Denial and Genocide Awareness Matter

As tensions continue to simmer in the former Yugoslav state, **Demir Mahmutćehajić's** reflections as to commemoration and erasure of current and previous genocides in Bosnia and elsewhere provides some insight into the possibilities and perils of the future.

In July 2017¹, Islamic Human Rights Commission organised a trip for the winner of the poetry competition for Genocide Memorial Day. I was charged with organising a trip and welcoming them. It was quite demanding to accompany six or seven women, mahjubahs, ladies, sisters around Bosnia, a very wounded country. Srebrenica was first on the itinerary followed by other places.

When I was asked to organise this trip, I suggested that we visit Srebrenica over a few days either side of 11th July, when there is the annual commemoration for the 8000 men and boys who were murdered by Serb forces in 1995. Every year on the anniversary of this massacre there is a Janazah - a funeral service - for those victims that were identified and their remains found over the preceding 12 months. To be clear, of those 8000, at the time of writing² some 80% have been identified. Around 7000 men and boys, buried after painstaking work by forensic anthropologists, have had their remains, which were found across multiple mass burial sites, discovered, put together and buried with the dignity and rites that every human being de-

serves.

Needless to say, the prayers are very emotional, especially for the relatives of those being buried. They stand next to the coffins of their loved ones. In many cases, these contain only a handful of bones. Only a handful of bones that are identified. Why?

After Serb forces committed this genocide, they systematically tried to hide remains of the victims. This involved digging out those that they buried a number of times, and moving their remains. As a result, it has taken more than 20 years just to find the remains of those people who were killed.

After Serb forces committed this genocide, they systematically tried to hide remains of the victims. This involved digging out those that they buried a number of times, and moving their remains. As a result, it has taken more than 20 years just to find the remains of those people who were killed.

Between 50,000 – 70,000 people come to Srebrenica to attend the janazah prayer. You see such huge amounts of people, such an energy, with wave upon wave of people. This is the image that the world – when it is looking – sees. This is why I suggested that it's not just enough to come on that day, that it's important to see Srebrenica the day before and the day after. Because otherwise it appears that the victims of Srebrenica are remembered and honoured. That the violence and hatred that fuelled the war in Bosnia has ended. That there is now peace. None of this is the case.

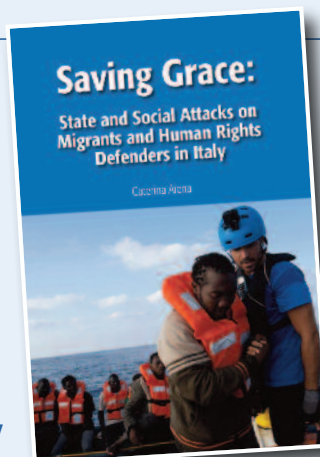
During the trip that summer, en route to Srebrenica, we found ourselves accidentally caught up in symbolism. It was hot – unbearably so. In the shade the temperature was in the very high 30's. In the sun, it was often 40°C. At some point driving uphill, our

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minivan broke down. We all had to get out and walk for a certain distance. We could feel what the summer of the 11th of July 1995 would have been like. We had to walk for only 400 or 500 metres but even that felt really uncomfortable. Can you imagine what it was like to walk in the same weather, in the same conditions for days³ without any break, being shelled, being shot at and hunted with dogs.

This was a very small way in which we could experience something, just for a short while, that could help us relate to what the victims went through. Even those of us with strong connections to what happened, even those of us from the next generations who care deeply about it. As Dr. Maung Zarni⁴ said, one cannot comprehend what a victim is like unless one has been in that situation.

On that day, we were being 'guarded' by soldiers and policemen, wearing the same insignia, as those who perpetrated the genocide in 1995. Srebrenica now sits in the entity Republika Srpska, where ethnic Serbs live in political autonomy within the Bosnian state. This is the legacy of the Dayton Accords that ended the war in December 1995. This is also where genocide denial is rampant and where many of the top wanted war criminals were found long after the end of the war. So can you imagine what it was like for the mother that lost all her relatives. She lost her father, husband, two sons, her brother uncles, all male relatives. She's coming to do a prayer over the few bones of her relatives that were found. And she's being watched over by the people in the same uniforms, in the same insignias as those who were perpetrating the murders of her loved ones. It is horrifying.

That evening we returned to the memorial centre after the mass funeral at around half past eight after Maghrib prayer. It was empty. There were 6,500 tombstones. Silent. Just two or three hours before that, you had tens of thousands of people there, but now they were all gone. We saw a couple of mothers walking by. There were no people living there. The life of the area has been destroyed, taken away. Only those tombs remain there,

standing as witnesses to the horror.

We had a plan to go the following day to record the way the Serbs are commemorating their own victims. Because there is a ceremony too for those perpetrators who were killed. It is part of a constant attempt to equalise victims. It is part of a constant attempt over the last 20 years to say that there were three sides, that everybody committed crimes, that they are all equal. This is being allowed deliberately by the international community.

When the Bosnian war, as we now call it, started in 1992, it was not the first genocide against the Bosnian Muslims. It was the eleventh. It is only the first one that is being recorded or remembered publicly and internationally and that only because of the modern media was present and witness to some of the worst crimes.

So on 12th of July, there is a commemoration of the Serb 'victims' in Srebrenica. It is a sham, a disgusting show. But it is also terrifying, because those same people who were taking part in genocide, killing innocent people, were allowed to attend in their military uniforms with flags and insignias to talk about how they're the victims, how all they did was defend themselves. The whole atmosphere is very, very tense. It did not feel secure, so we did not try to venture too close.

There are a lot of documents about the Srebrenica genocide and there have been quite a number of convictions of the perpetrators. The last prominent one was General

Ratko Mladic who was the commander in chief of the Serbian forces. This is the man who stated on national television that, "after 600 years of battle, it's time to get revenge on Turks." To them, to those who joined forces to perpetrate and justify genocide, we Bosnian Muslims are come from outside this land. We are 'Turks'. We are supposedly invaders. We are those who are completely dehumanised. So for an ordinary Serbian soldier at that time, it was acceptable to rape, kill, torture, steal, destroy those who were not seen as humans. They were trained in such a way, that they had no problem killing all day and then going back and spending time with their families.

It is unbelievable. It is unexplainable. Unimaginable. But it is even worse when you say that this was not the first time. When the Bosnian war, as we now call it, started in 1992, it was not the first genocide against the Bosnian Muslims. It was the eleventh. It is only the first one that is being recorded or remembered publicly and internationally and that only because of the modern media was present and witness to some of the worst crimes.

Just to give you one example of previous genocides, there was a pit, an earth pit near my hometown Stolac, into which in 1941 over 700 Muslims were thrown alive. One by one, they were taken there and pushed in. The pit was called the pit of crows. Because it was so deep and dark, the crows nested inside. Out of the huge number of people who were killed from the area only one person survived. For days she was catching live crows and drinking their blood just to survive. She had fallen on the bodies of those who died before her and lived. She was found by a Serb shepherd, who was herding sheep and heard her screaming. He rescued her, took her back to her home and protected her from the others who wanted to erase all traces of this horrible crime.

In the wake of the Second World War, the new Yugoslav system did not allow her to speak about it until 1989.

There is also a village near my hometown

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The consequences of genocide denial

where in 1943, the Ustaše paramilitary, who at that time were the part of the forces that were allied to the Nazis, came and butchered around 60 civilians - everybody that they caught there. Then on 13th July 1993, the new Ustaše paramilitary came back with the same uniforms, with the same ideology, with the same idea, and killed everybody they found: babies, adults, children, everybody.

So when we are talking about a genocide, a genocidal intention, it is wrong in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina to talk only about the Srebrenica. Srebrenica was a genocide; but the international community is trying to hide the facts. It is trying to hide the whole story. The Bosnian genocide, from 1992 - 95 was only recognised because the perpetrators were not able to hide it. Recognition was forced in much the same way as the international community is doing now with the genocide of the Rohingya.

So, there were ten genocides before the war of 1992 - 95 that were not recorded. The eleventh genocide in Bosnia started in 1992, not in 1995. In the first few months of war, from April to June /July 1992, Serb forces set up concentration camps, torture chambers and rape houses. Over 60,000 women were raped. It was systematic and organised. The rape houses were where the Serbian soldiers were sent when they came back from the frontlines, to be 'rewarded'.

Hundreds of thousands of people were placed in concentration camps, waiting for their turn to be killed. The reason why they were not killed is because, some activists, some journalists, some media found those places, and they recorded and released footage.

Because the concentration camps around Prijedor were revealed, those people were not killed. But near Prijedor there are places like Kori anске Stijene, where hundreds of people were taken by trucks and just pushed from the top of the mountain. In Prijedor in 1992, all Muslims were forced to wear white arm bands, or to hang a white piece of cloth on their houses them to mark them.

In the first months of the attack on Bosnia by Serbia, then later by Croatia, now

an EU member, over 70% of Bosnian Muslims were displaced. That represents one and a half million people. One million were expelled outside the country and half a million were internally displaced. There were a number of towns, areas, that were completely emptied. To minimise the scale of the genocide and reduce it to just an incident in Srebrenica is a very carefully thought-out strategy.

From the first day, the narratives of the western media, of the western law makers, of the western powers, were that there is no collective guilt. This is very interesting, and runs against the precedent set up by the Nuremberg Tribunals after the Second World War.

Ultimately, as we are seeing now, with so few thinking about it, when somebody raises a question, it is said, 'Oh well everybody fought, and everybody committed crimes and did all these sorts of things. Okay they did very horrible things in Srebrenica, they killed 800 or maybe 8000 men, but you know they were provoked.' These are the type of things we are hearing now. That is how it goes if we don't acknowledge both what happened, and also how it came to happen. The erasure of past genocides made future genocides possible. This is what we have to prevent.

The issue is not about cultural denial. The International Tribunal for Crimes in the

Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), was set up to try war criminals. From the first day, the narratives of the western media, of the western law makers, of the western powers, were that there is no collective guilt. This is very interesting, and runs against the precedent set by the Nuremberg Tribunals after the Second World War. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs took part in the genocide, so how can there be no collective guilt? The genocides that occurred were the outcomes of social and political cultures of hatred. In the post Second World War decades (arguably until now) there has been an endless process of de-Nazification. How is it that in a case so similarly resembling the Nazi extermination of Jews, we find the international justice system content with saying that guilt will be placed on only individuals and not government and their institutions? I have written about this elsewhere, but the key point for the purpose of this piece is that the legal culture, heavily impacted by a Western political culture, is also perpetuating the narratives that fuel the cycle of genocide.

Demir Mahmutćehajić

is from Stolac in Bosnia. After some years in the UK where he helped found the Islamic Human Rights Commission in 1997, and later became the president of the London Islamic Community of Bosnians, he returned to Bosnia. Since 2005 he has been constantly engaged in the civil rights movement in the Bosnia and Herzegovina, at one time leading the DOSTA! (Enough!) movement. He has written and spoken about genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its causes and consequences for over 25 years. Many of these speeches, reports and articles can be found on the IHRC website. Find him on Twitter @stolac92.

¹ This article is based on a presentation by Mahmutćehajić at Genocide Memorial Day in London, UK, January 2018. The trip he refers to is from summer 2017.

² This addition was made in September 2023.

³ The genocide in Srebrenica took place across the week of 11th July, with those killed often being hunted down as they crossed the countryside, either being marched as prisoners or trying to escape.

⁴ Dr. Maung Zarni is a Burmese human rights activist, who spoke alongside Mahmutćehajić at the 2018 GMD event, on the genocide of the Rohingya.

Counter-Islamophobia Toolkit (CIK)

This project has produced documentation targeted at policy makers, lawmakers, academics and activists in order to tackle Islamophobia.

IHRC alongside 5 academic partners across Europe was part of the Counter-Islamophobia Toolkit team that looked at narratives and counternarratives to Islamophobia in 8 European countries: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Czech Republic, Hungary and Greece.



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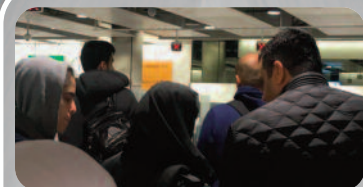
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