

No. 1

CAIR-CAN ANNUAL REVIEW 2003 - 2004



Your Voice. Your Future.



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"More than ever, it is clear that Canadian Muslims must create strong and vibrant institutions to allow us to defend our legal rights and fully participate in the fabric of Canadian life. CAIR-CAN's activism is professional, timely and essential."

- Dr. Jamal Badawi

CAIR  **CAN**

Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations
www.caircan.ca 1-866-524-0004

Your Voice. Your Future.



MESSAGE

FROM THE CHAIR OF CAIR-CAN

*Assalaamu'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuh,
Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of Allah.*

Dear Reader:

I pray that this message reaches you in the best of health and spirits.

It is my pleasure to present to you CAIR-CAN's first Annual Review, 2003-2004.

This portfolio contains a comprehensive overview of CAIR-CAN's recent record of activism in the areas of media engagement, anti-discrimination and public advocacy. The work presented here is the result of the tireless effort and sacrifice of many individuals, volunteers and generous donors.

As a young organization we have, Alhamdulillah (to God belongs all praise), made significant strides in attaining our goal of becoming an established and professional national grassroots organization that represents the concerns of Canadian Muslims.

Our activism has been, Alhamdulillah, diligent, dedicated and daring. With Allah's help, we have raised the bar in defending and promoting the interests of Canadian Muslims.

I invite you to review this publication and join us in meeting the challenges that we face as a community. Together, let us work for a secure and prosperous Canada.

It's your voice and your future.

Wasalaamu'alaykum wa rahmatullah,
Peace be with you and the mercy of Allah.



Sheema Khan, Ph.D
CAIR-CAN, Chair



INTRODUCTIONS: Who are we?

From humble beginnings to national representation...

"More than ever, it is clear that Canadian Muslims must create strong and vibrant institutions to allow us to defend our legal rights and fully participate in the fabric of Canadian life. CAIR-CAN's activism is professional, timely and essential."

-Dr. Jamal Badawi

The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) is a national organization with a grassroots membership that empowers Canadian Muslims through community education, media engagement, anti-discrimination efforts and public advocacy. CAIR-CAN attempts to foster an accurate understanding and fuller appreciation of Islam in Canadian society.

CAIR-CAN is distinct from its sister organization, the Washington, D.C.-based CAIR, although the two coordinate on areas of mutual concern.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Serving you from the nation's capital...

CAIR-CAN's national headquarters are located in the nation's capital, Ottawa. The office includes a reception, a waiting room, three offices and a boardroom.



CAIR-CAN'S WEBSITE: www.caircan.ca

Keeping you connected...

CAIR-CAN's website serves as a comprehensive resource for news affecting Canadian Muslims and allows for easy online reporting of discrimination, racial profiling and hate crimes. The website features a complete archive of CAIR-CAN's work, press releases, action alerts and opinion pieces - and also contains a regularly updated list of articles relevant to Canadian Muslims.

OUR HISTORY

In 1996, a group of concerned Canadian Muslims started an informal network to work in Canada with CAIR, an organization well known among Canadian Muslims since 1994. In the spring of 1997, CAIR-Montreal was officially formed with endorsement

from CAIR. Soon after, CAIR-Ottawa replaced CAIR-Montreal. CAIR-CAN was incorporated in 2000.

Currently, CAIR-CAN has 4 employees. Executive Director and lawyer, Riad Saloojee, was hired in 2001; Director of Operations Naeem Saloojee joined in 2002; Community Relations Coordinator Ikram

Elmuradi began work in 2003; and Human Rights Coordinator and Toronto representative Ibrahim Danial, also a lawyer, commenced work in 2004.

In addition, CAIR-CAN has an impressive board of directors:



Chair: Dr. Sheema Khan

Sheema Khan completed her undergraduate studies at McGill prior to obtaining her Ph.D in Chemical Physics from Harvard University. Residing in Ottawa, she is a longtime activist and speaker and has been the Chair of CAIR-CAN since its inception. She is a regular columnist for the Globe and Mail and works as an intellectual property consultant.

Dr. Jamal Badawi

Jamal Badawi, one of North America's most renowned Islamic scholars, is a professor at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he is currently a cross-appointed faculty member in the Departments of Religious Studies and Management. Often called upon to comment on issues relevant to Canadian Muslims,

he has also produced publications on gender equity and an impressive collection of audio materials introducing Islam.

Khadija Haffajee

Khadija Haffajee, a retired schoolteacher who lives in Ottawa, Ontario, is a regular speaker on issues affecting the Muslim community both in Canada and internationally. She has worked with organizations in the fields of inter-faith dialogue, women's empowerment, spiritual counselling and civil society development.

Faisal Kutty, LLB

Lawyer, writer and entrepreneur Faisal Kutty is well recognized for his media and social activism. Faisal is a graduate of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law. Residing in Toronto, Ontario, his firm, Baksh & Kutty, is the largest predominantly Muslim law firm in Canada. He is also senior counsel for the CMCLA, the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association.

Shahina Siddiqui

Freelance writer and counsellor Shahina Siddiqui resides in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her articles are frequently published in the local and national media and she has pioneered projects in spiritual counselling and social work. She is the President of ISSA, the Islamic Social Services Association.

Dr. Moustafa Fahmy

Moustapha Fahmy resides in Kingston, Ontario, and is Professor Emeritus of Electrical Engineering at Queen's University. He is a frequent speaker on Islam to schools, churches and other organizations both in Kingston and surrounding areas.

Dr. Wael Haddara

Wael Haddara, a pharmacist and doctor who resides in London, Ontario, is a well known Canadian Muslim academic, activist and speaker. Wael is a graduate of Queen's University's Faculty of Medicine. His particular strengths include strategic media and political engagement.

Aftab Sabir, MBA

Aftab Sabir, CAIR-CAN's representative in Calgary, Alberta, is one of the founding members of the organization. He specializes in financial and organizational development and is a manager for Salam Financial. He obtained his MBA from Schulich School of Business, York University.

AbdulBasit Khan, LLB

Abdul-Basit Khan is a graduate of McGill University's Faculty of Law and practices labour and employment law with Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP in Toronto. Abdul-Basit completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto and obtained an M.A. in Political Science from McGill.

Latif Ahmed

A founding member of CAIR-CAN, Latif Ahmed, who lives in Ottawa, Ontario, is an engineer by profession. CAIR-CAN regularly draws on Latif for his considerable technical and fundraising expertise.

The CAIR-CAN shurah (consultative board) is an integral part of the CAIR-CAN family and includes a diverse group of Canadian Muslim academics and activists based in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, London, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.



PUBLICATIONS AND KITS

Helping you present Islam...

CAIR-CAN's publications include the following: "A Journalist's Guide to Islam," "An Employer's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices," "An Educator's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices," "A Health Care Provider's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices," as well as a succinct "Know Your Rights" pocket guide. These publications are regularly requested by government departments, local and national media, police services, hospitals, school, private firms and various non-profit groups.

Publications have been requested and ordered by government agencies such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Arts Canada, Canadian Heritage, the Department of National Defense, Citizenship and Immigration Canada; media organizations such as CTV and CBC; private companies such as UPS, Client Logic and Convergys; police services such as the RCMP, the Canadian Police College and others.

CAIR-CAN's detailed and practical community media kits on Ramadaan and Hajj are essential resources in the toolbox of any Muslim media activist.



WORKSHOPS

Educating our community...

CAIR-CAN has offered seminars and workshops to many Canadian organizations such as the CRTC, Heritage Canada, the Ottawa Police, the Canadian Police College and schools to educate them about Islamic practices and issues of religious accommodation.

"On behalf of the Canadian Police College, and all those who were fortunate enough to hear your talk, I would like to express our thanks for making the seminar on Islam such a success. [Y]our discussion, I am sure, dispelled many myths and gave many in the audience their first informed look at Islam."

- *Tonita Murray, Director General, Canadian Police College*

In addition, CAIR-CAN has delivered over 25 workshops to Muslim communities and leaders across Canada in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Kingston, London, Windsor, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, St. Catherines, St. John's and Halifax to provide them with the essential knowledge and tools for effective media relations and human rights advocacy.

"Thanks to CAIR-CAN's professional advice, commitment and support, we were able to clarify misconceptions and provide more accurate information of Islam and Muslims. Thank you CAIR-CAN for your dedication and remarkable work!"

- *Najah Barrada, Workshop given at an elementary school in Ottawa*



MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Your experienced and articulate voice...

Whether it is straight-up commentary, one-on-one interviews, live broadcasts, radio and television talk-ins, informative panel discussion or heated debate, CAIR-CAN provides experienced and articulate representation for Canadian Muslims.

CAIR-CAN's media portfolio in print, radio and television is unparalleled in its depth and breadth. When it comes to commentary on issues affecting Canadian Muslims, CAIR-CAN is sought-after by media outlets across the country. Our representatives comment regularly on CTV National and its local affiliates, Canada AM, Question Period, CBC National, CBC Newsworld, CBC Radio, Global TV, OMNI, Macleans, CPAC, the Globe and Mail and most city dailies.

Over the past several years, CAIR-CAN has spoken to issues such as the deportation of Maher Arar; the detention and torture of Canadians abroad; racial profiling; the erosion of civil liberties and the rule of law; hate crimes and discrimination; rising Islamophobia; multiculturalism; accommodation issues such as hijab (Islamic headscarf), daily prayer and Friday prayer; Islamic rites such as fasting and Hajj (pilgrimage); anti-terrorism legislation; and Canadian foreign policy.



"CAIR-CAN is a valuable resource for writers, reporters, producers and editors. Riad Saloojee is a true professional and a solid contact for journalists. He is articulate, patient and explains complex issues dealing with Islam in an honest and open manner."

- Karlene Nation, Diversity Reporter/Producer, CFTO/CTV

"WHETHER IT'S THE ISSUING OF A 'GOOD NEWS' ALERT, PROVIDING AN OVERVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE ON AN ISSUE OF SPECIFIC PERTINENCE TO CANADIAN MUSLIMS, OR ANALYZING THE EFFECTS OF ANTI-MUSLIM DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT, CAIR-CAN PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT SERVICE TO ALL CANADIANS."

- Lois Sweet, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University



FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

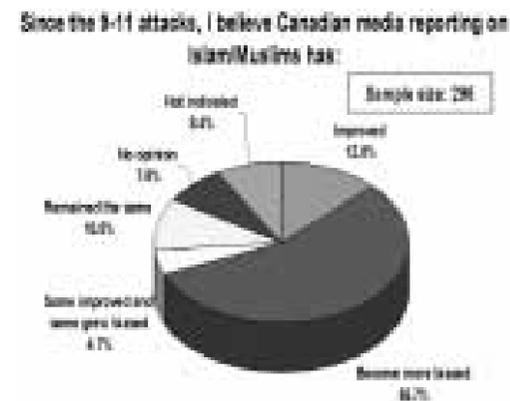
Supporting you with principled resolution...

The tragic events of September 11th have led to increased suspicion and discrimination against Canadian Muslims. Through effective grassroots documentation, surveys and research, CAIR-CAN fights for full and inclusive citizenship for Canadian Muslims.

Cases that CAIR-CAN has resolved have included accommodation issues such as the observance of Friday prayers, prayer facilities at work and university, hijab (Islamic headscarf), Eid (Islamic festivals) holidays, Islamophobic comments by members of Parliament, police misconduct, harassment by security agencies and racial profiling.

"CAIR-CAN's experience and practical advocacy led to a very successful resolution of our prayer accommodation issue with the university."

- Ahmed Alqadri, MSA present, Carleton University



PUBLIC ADVOCACY

Defending your rights and liberties...

Protecting the legal and political interests of Canadian Muslims requires vigilance and sustained government advocacy. CAIR-CAN has been at the forefront of Muslim organizations in defending basic Canadian rights and liberties.

CAIR-CAN has organized press conferences and offered written and oral testimony before parliamentary committees on legislation related to charitable fundraising and terrorism, and the omnibus anti-terrorism legislation. Moreover, CAIR-CAN has testified on Canada's relations with the Muslim world before the Foreign Affairs Committee, on the Canadian media before a special Senate Committee and submitted a legal brief to defend the broadcast of Al-Jazeera in Canada.

"CAIR-CAN plays a valuable role empowering Canadian Muslims, with a deeper understanding of their rights as citizens. By addressing issues of particular interest to and impact on Muslims, as individuals and as community, in an insightful and educated manner, CAIR-CAN has helped foster greater understanding and dialogue among all Canadians."

- Alexa McDonough, MP Halifax and NDP Foreign Affairs Critic



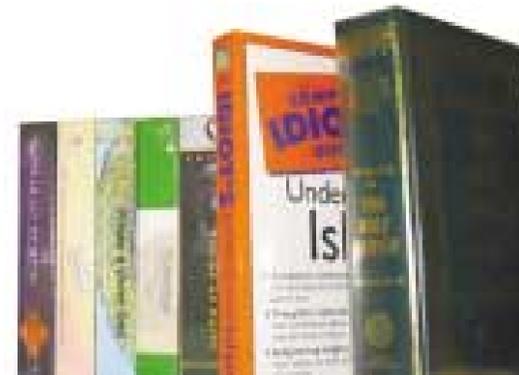
NATIONAL LIBRARY PROJECT

Educating our friends and neighbours...

As a proactive measure in dispelling the misinformation and misconceptions about Islam, CAIR-CAN established a national library project entitled, "Explore Islamic Civilization and Culture." The project encourages Canadian Muslims to sponsor a 13-item package consisting of books, tapes and multimedia material to their local and public libraries.

"I am especially impressed by the resources you selected, which are excellent choices to help make Islam accessible and understandable to everyone in the community."

- *Kae Elgie, Manager of Information Services, Waterloo Regional Library*



ACADEMIC COMMENTARY

Presenting our faith to readers and writers...

CAIR-CAN has assembled a growing portfolio of critical commentary in prestigious Canadian academic journals.

Articles include a detailed and authoritative rebuttal of Irshad Manji's *The Trouble with Islam* in the *Canadian Literary Review*, an essay on Muslims and citizenship in *Canadian Diversity*; and a review of media representation on Islam post-9/11 in *Voices*.

"Sheema Khan's lengthy and well-written review for us of *"The Trouble with Islam"* by Irshad Manji was an authoritative antidote not only to Manji's own highly personal take on Islam but also to the media frenzy that had built up around the book. Khan knows how to use her scholarship in a calm and accessible fashion that can help outsiders a great deal in understanding the Muslim community in Canada."

- *Bronwyn Drainie, Editor, Literary Review of Canada*



OPINION PIECES

Taking your voice across the country...

Opinion pieces are arguably the most powerful and effective way to articulate a perspective on important issues of the day.

CAIR-CAN has an unprecedented rate of opinion piece success. We have published, as of March 2004, more than 40 opinion pieces in major Canadian dailies such as the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, the Ottawa Citizen, the Montreal Gazette, the Calgary Herald, the Edmonton Journal, the Winnipeg Free Press and the Cape Breton Post.

"CAIR-CAN is providing a most timely and essential service for the cause of Islam and Muslims; they have a reputation for professionalism, efficiency, commitment and integrity which in my mind are the most valuable assets of any Islamic organization worthy of the name."

- *Shaikh Ahmed Kutty*



MAHER ARAR

Our service in the path of justice...

CAIR-CAN was instrumental in obtaining the release of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen who was detained in the United States on route to Canada and deported to Syria where he was tortured. After spending more than a year in a Syrian prison, Maher Arar returned to Canada.

CAIR-CAN's efforts were critical in securing Maher's release. CAIR-CAN assisted Maher's wife, Dr. Monia Mazigh, in her campaign to secure her husband's release, played a key role in the Maher Arar Support Committee, met with Foreign Affairs and the US embassy, wrote opinion pieces, issued action alerts and gave frequent media commentary.

In the words of Maher:

"The future of Muslims in Canada depends on organizations like CAIR-CAN and others. CAIR-CAN was the first organization to support my wife and her efforts to bring justice to me.

"Since its creation three years ago, CAIR-CAN has been active in the important areas of media relations, anti-discrimination and political advocacy. These areas have been traditionally neglected by other Muslim organizations. From conducting Islamic awareness courses to writing op-eds for major Canadian newspapers, CAIR-CAN has been successful in changing misconceptions about Islam in the minds of non-Muslims.

"The mission undertaken [by] CAIR-CAN is a noble one and I urge all Muslims to support its activities financially and in any other way possible. Let's put our faith into action."



No. 1

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2003 - 2004

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PUBLICATION

TOPIC



OP-ED PORTFOLIO

"Whether it's the issuing of a 'good news' alert, providing an overview of media coverage on an issue of specific pertinence to Canadian Muslims, or analyzing the effects of anti-Muslim discrimination and harassment, CAIR-CAN provides an important service to all Canadians."

- Lois Sweet, Assistant Professor,
School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University

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OP-ED TITLES

DATE

February 14th 2004

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

Don't misread the Koran

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

I met "Leila" 10 years ago. She was 19, maybe 20. She had left family and friends to join her new husband in Montreal. The marriage had soured; she bore the brunt of his frustrations. When she became pregnant, he demanded an abortion. When she refused, he punched her in the abdomen. The violence grew worse after the child was born. Leila finally called the police when he stabbed her in the hand. She was ready to start a new life, with infant in tow, at a shelter for battered immigrant women. Despite her ordeal, she maintained a sparkle in her eyes and flashed an infectious smile.

She was also trying to reconnect with her faith, Islam, and the Muslim community. All the more astounding, given that her husband had told her that Islam gave him the right to inflict violence on his wife. Yet Leila knew with implacable certainty that his actions were anathema to her faith. She could easily separate his actions from his perverse interpretations. I, on the other hand, had a harder time, having heard too many stories like Leila's.

I related these incidents to Ridwan Yusuf, a wonderful soft-spoken imam from Nigeria, who listened patiently to my tirade at the impotence of our community leaders to speak out against conjugal violence: "Wife-

beaters are absolving themselves of responsibility by saying that Islam gives them the right to do this, when clearly it does not. Who is teaching this to them? Why are not the men in our community speaking out against it? We scream indignation at the oppression of Muslims by others, but we remain silent about oppression from within."

Clearly moved, he pledged to co-operate with community leaders to assist vulnerable women and children. Volunteers came forward to offer moral and financial support, ready to learn more about the roots, symptoms and treatment of a social blight that cuts across all societies. Ridwan Yusuf had the courage to address the issue head-on at the largest community gathering of the year, the Eid prayer. He systematically stripped away the mantle of Islamic legitimacy given by violence-prone husbands, followed by exhortations toward building a marriage foundation based on love, mercy, and respect.

Prophet Mohammed never once laid a finger on any of his wives, denounced those who did and asserted that those best in character are those who are best to their wives.

Last month, a Spanish court sentenced an imam for inciting violence against women.

He had written a book, *Women in Islam*, that included advice for Muslim men on how to beat their wives. He argued in his defence that he was merely repeating opinions of medieval scholars. Yet Muslim experts testified that the imam's approach misinterpreted both the spirit and letter of Islamic teaching. Muslim groups agreed with the ruling against the man.

Such small steps forward are necessary to counter regressive forces, some of which apply narrow, hateful interpretations to the (Arabic) text of the Koran. Islamic scholarship demands a comprehensive examination of all Koranic verses, with Prophet Mohammed's interpretation serving as the sublime example. To read the Koranic sura, or chapter, on women as condoning the beating of one's wife is to see it through the lens of one's own prejudices -- as a feeble attempt to justify one's misbehaviour.

We cannot discount the influence of religious figures in shaping attitudes toward women: The Taliban practice of banning female education was supported by scholars of the region. And the practice in some countries of female genital mutilation, which predates Islam, is often defended by those who would link it outrageously with the Koran. A 1995 documentary on the subject featured a Somali man declaring: "Of course we do it. It is in the Koran." Of course it is not! But false attribution is comforting to those who stubbornly cling to vile cultural practices.

Others have no hesitation in commenting on the nature of woman as being deficient in intellect or a temptress to weaken male character, or both. Thankfully, there are enlightened women and men who are working tirelessly to promote gender equity within an Islamic paradigm, confronting misogyny head-on. Canada's own Ingrid Mattson, professor at the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, and Jamal Badawi, director of the Halifax-based Islamic Information

Foundation, are world-renowned in this field. They espouse Koranic teachings that a woman is a moral agent, fully accountable for her moral choices, and responsible for building a strong civil society in co-operation with her male counterpart.

In turn, many Muslim women have sought deeper personal study of their faith, and questioned unjust cultural traditions prevalent in their societies. For example, many now demand the right to education, to vote, to initiate divorce and to decline marriage proposals -- by invoking principles laid down 1,400 years ago. Examples of women in early Islamic history are effectively being used to abolish the misperception that a good Muslim woman is a silent doormat, subservient to her husband, with few independent aspirations.

Again, the Prophet Mohammed serves as the best example. His first wife, Khadija, was a business woman for whom Mohammed first worked, and with whom he later became a partner.

In North America, the dividends of this approach are evident as Muslim women take leadership roles in university, community and national associations. Admittedly, there is a sizable disconnect between the ideals of the faith and cultural practice in many parts of the Muslim world. Those seeking reform within an Islamic framework are attacked as feminists (or worse) by those resistant to change, and as apologists (or worse) by those who see Islam as the problem.

These attacks should stiffen reformers' resolve to educate an uninformed public about Islamic principles, and to work tirelessly to improve social conditions, wherever they are. The key is faith in God as the foundation of self-empowerment. That may seem peculiar to a secular mind, but it has helped to propel many women, including Leila, to change their lives for the better.

DATE

January 1st 2004

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

Banning hijab: The new colonialism

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

The land of *liberté, égalité et fraternité* has taken a decidedly selective definition of these ideals. The banning of all forms of visible religious symbols in state schools (except for discrete pendants) is ostensibly based on France's secular foundations. Some view it as secular orthodoxy, a mirror image of religious extremism that the nation purports to curtail.

Yet, it seems clear to me that the target of the ban is the hijab, a visible symbol of France's five-million strong Muslim community. And the arguments presented by French officialdom essentially present a Bushian choice: you are either with us, or against us.

There is even the patronizing arrogance of Bernard Stasi, head of the commission on secularism in French society, who has equated the banning of the hijab as "a chance for Islam to save itself."

France – having once colonized the people of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria and Lebanon – will now attempt the same on its own shores. The French model of colonization was to strip away the indigenous identities of its subjects, replacing language and culture with that of the motherland. It

never succeeded, however, in turning people away from Islam.

The most vocal opponents of the hijab have been so-called feminists who have decided, that the Muslim headscarf is a symbol of women's oppression and subjugation.

Apparently irrelevant is the voice of Muslim women themselves who choose to abide by the precepts of modesty of their faith. Feminism, which is about the empowerment of women to make their own choices, now falls prey to the very dictates it once battled. Within certain extreme Muslim circles, a Muslim woman's voice is never to be heard in public, while her intellect is deemed deficient. Ironically French feminists seem to agree with these views, having decided how a woman in France must dress, without any respect for the diversity of women's own thoughts on the matter. Call it imperial feminism.

The debate also centres on the role of religion in the public sphere.

France has decided to take the path of strict separation between church and state. Germany is also grappling with the growing presence of the hijab, with battles under

way to ban it altogether for government employees. In Italy, a local court upheld a complaint (brought by a Muslim) to forbid the display of a school crucifix, much to the horror of most Italians, including the local Muslim community. All of these policies are on a collision course with article nine of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of religion.

Given the history of religion and state in Europe, it is not surprising that issues of faith cause so much consternation. Throw in a few centuries of colonial rule and former subjects who now demand rights to their religious identity as citizens of the motherland. How then do societies balance the rights and interests of various groups? While there is no pat answer, the best policy is one that is attuned to the changing dynamics of the population. As long as there is give and take, there is hope for all to live together with mutual respect. Absolute decrees only serve to alienate.

Indeed, the rejectionists on both sides of the debate are happy with the French ruling. Those trying to improve relations between West and East, trying to convince Muslims that the West is not their enemy, will now have an uphill battle.

The situation in France will have repercussions in Quebec. In 1994, the first Muslim schoolgirl was expelled for wearing the hijab. At the time, the arguments presented by those who would ban the hijab mirrored those in France. The fear of the bloody Algerian civil war spilling onto the shores of Marseilles, suddenly translated into fundamentalism on the shores of the Saint-Lawrence.

Then, as now, the hijab was seen as a symbol of women's oppression, militant Islam and a threat to secularism in Quebec

schools. Some voiced the opinion that newcomers should check their identity at the border, forgetting the behaviour of their own ancestors towards aboriginal communities, not to mention the Charter of Rights. At one point, a few schools requested able-bodied Muslim students not to observe the fast of Ramadan.

While the Quebec Human Rights Commission ruled that discrimination against the hijab was contrary to the provincial charter, it did not stop the province's largest teachers union calling for a ban on the wearing of skullcaps, hijabs and turban's in Quebec's public schools in 1995. While the vote was not enforced, militant secular voices remain strong in the province's education system.

Since then, the QHRC has helped to resolve more incidents of schools demanding that Muslim schoolgirls choose between education and their hijab. Their recurrence indicates that tensions continue to exist. Given the developments in France, there will be renewed calls in la belle province to ban all religious symbols, using the same arguments of la République Française. Those who believe in building bridges of mutual respect, accommodation and understanding will have to step forward.

A few years ago, I attended a lecture where a man complained to an Islamic scholar about discrimination: "They kick our girls out from school. They do not hire women with hijabs. They do not respect our beliefs. What should we do?" The scholar, a Canadian convert, answered, "No one said this faith would be easy. You have to fight for what you believe in, within the system. This country has rules and laws that permit you to observe your faith. You have to work hard to educate people. Don't expect everything to be handed to you so easily. This test is part of your faith."

DATE

November 24th 2003

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

Deliver us from suspicion

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

For Muslims, the month of Ramadan is a special time to purify the spirit through fasting, charity and extra prayers. We reflect deeply upon the Koran, expressing gratitude for the many blessings we often take for granted. Whether the favours are tangible (e.g. health, food, shelter) or intangible (peace, personal security), the heartfelt sentiment is best captured by the phrase: "There but for the grace of God go I."

Earlier this month, I was waiting in a doctor's office with two flu-ridden children. It was Nov. 11 and, at 11 a.m., the busy staff stopped all work and stood respectfully to a solemn rendition of O Canada broadcast on CBC Radio. One silver-haired patient sang with deep conviction. My beautiful country, I thought. A beacon of light in a world filled with so much darkness. One of the few places where a worried mother can get prompt medical attention for her sick children, despite our current health-care concerns.

As we observed two minutes of silence, my six-year-old son asked what was happening. I tried to explain the significance of remembering the efforts of those who had died in conflict.

But it's also important to remember that while Canadian soldiers were fighting tyrann

ny overseas, many were battling the tyranny of discrimination here in Canada. During both world wars, various ethnic groups faced suspicion, even internment, under the pretext of national security. Their treatment was often enshrined in law, later repealed by the efforts of those who found the miscarriage of justice unconscionable. Albertan suffragette Nellie McClung fought on behalf of Japanese Canadians and Jewish refugees during the Second World War. Such struggles have helped the cause of justice right here.

In the post-9/11 era, Canadian Muslims and Arabs find themselves a minority under suspicion, based on the pretext of national security. The harrowing tale of Maher Arar has evoked collective outrage -- more so, given the signs of complicity on the part of Canadian security services.

Yet, at least three more Canadians remain in Middle East prisons: Ahmad Abou El Maati in Egypt, and Abdullah Almalki and Arwad al-Bouchi in Syria. According to family members, all three were under surveillance by CSIS and the RCMP. Does Canada have its own unofficial "rendition" policy -- asking unsavory regimes to pick up Canadian citizens travelling abroad, and subject them to torture to break their will?

In Mr. Arar's case, it's clear that transcripts of his "confession" found their way back to CSIS in Canada, with portions leaked by "anonymous" government sources. Attempting to smear Mr. Arar, they claimed that he had "spilled the beans" on some of the Muslim immigrants imprisoned on secret evidence under Canada's security certificate. Does the Crown's "evidence" include torture-based confessions -- evidence that would be rejected under normal rules? Remember: The defendant is not allowed to cross-examine, let alone see the evidence presented against him.

Currently five people are imprisoned here in Canada without charge: Muhammad Mahjoub (since June, 2000); Mahmoud Jaballah (August, 2001); Hassan Almrei (October, 2001); Mohamed Harkat (December, 2002); and Adil Charkaoui (May, 2003).

Even presiding judges find the Kafkaesque scenario deeply troubling. The judge in the Jaballah case has called the process "invidious," describing the detention as Canada's version of Guantanamo Bay. Federal Court Justice James K. Hugesson, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, said: "We hate it. We do not like this process of having to sit alone hearing only one party and looking at the materials produced by only one party and trying to figure out for ourselves what is wrong with the case. Good cross-examination requires really careful preparation and a good knowledge of your case. And by definition, judges do not do that. . . . I sometimes feel a little bit like a fig leaf."

Our immigration department, stinging from American criticism of being too soft,

decided to show just how tough it was by publicizing its handling of 19 Pakistani illegal immigrants. The muscle-flexing was meant for the audience due south. Even justice officials here said there was no evidence of a terrorist conspiracy -- just your garden-variety immigration scam. Yet the publicity cast a smear on the lives of these men, and sent a chill through the local Pakistani community. Those deported back to Pakistan have been interrogated about the alleged al-Qaeda link. Our immigration department refuses to admit error or issue an apology.

These are a few of the more public examples of Muslims caught in the dragnet of security zeal. While there have been no terrorist attacks in North America since 9/11, many innocent lives have been ruined. At time of difficulty, Muslims are reminded that "God does not burden any soul beyond what it can bear." Rather than sink into victimhood, they should stand tall and demand fair treatment, following the examples of the struggle by Canada's other ethnic groups.

On the eve of her husband's return from Syria, Monia Mazigh graciously called his release "a victory for Canadian values." Given what we now know, this characterization was premature. There will be no victory until there is a full accounting of the role of government agencies in the suspension of constitutional rights of many Muslims and Arabs.

In the past, Canadians have resolved to right the wrongs inflicted on members of our mosaic. Let's take this challenge, O Canada, to stand on guard for thee.

DATE

November 5th 2003

PUBLICATION

*Special to Canadian Muslim news media.
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the Daily News and the Cape Breton Post*

TOPIC

Public inquiry needed for Arar: Is Canada subcontracting torture?

By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)

It was heart-wrenching, yes, but refreshing to hear Maher Arar finally speak in his own words and not through a series of garbled Canadian government leaks.

It has now been 13 months since Mr. Arar, a Canadian citizen born in Syria but traveling on his Canadian passport, was detained and arrested at New York's Kennedy Airport on September 26, 2002, and then deported, first to Jordan and then to Syria.

In what many have stated was a cloak-and-dagger smear campaign against Arar over the last few weeks, anonymous Canadian government officials leaked that Arar had traveled and trained in Afghanistan and that he was not tortured in Syria.

Yesterday, Arar stated unequivocally that he has never traveled to Afghanistan.

And, regarding the issue of torture, Arar spoke of being locked up in what was literally a "grave" for ten months in Syria - a room with no sunlight, three feet wide, six feet deep and seven feet high - frequented by rats and sprinkled by animal urine through ceiling vents. He was beaten repeatedly over his body with a shredded electrical cable; threatened with electrocu-

tion and with being stuffed into a tire and beaten on the soles of his feet; and frequently punched, kicked and slapped. And, in what he describes as perhaps the most painful punishment, he was deliberately locked for days in a waiting room, where he heard the screaming and wailing of other prisoners being tortured.

Physically and mentally devastated, Arar agreed to confess to whatever his captors wanted him to. They wanted him to say he had been to Afghanistan. He confessed and signed documents under the threat of physical harm.

As for the American role in his nightmare, Arar stated that the Americans repeatedly denied his request for a lawyer, interrogated him to exhaustion, vaccinated him against his will, and deported him to Syria over his repeated objections and concerns that the Syrians would torture him. It is a cruel irony that the Americans deported him to a place they themselves consider a rogue state.

But who would have thought that Canada's own security agencies played a central role in Arar's nightmare.

It is now appears to be beyond question that the RCMP passed on detailed information

about Arar to American authorities. At one point, US authorities presented Arar with an apartment lease from 1997 and Arar was questioned in detail about people he knew or met in Canada.

Moreover, Arar's testimony reveals extremely disturbing information about the involvement of CSIS. It appears that there was an open communication channel between CSIS and the Syrians. CSIS agents made two visits to Syria during Arar's imprisonment. And, shockingly, the Syrians gave CSIS the interrogation transcripts and Arar's torture extracted confessions.

Here, then, is the "reliable source" for the government leaks: A confession extracted by torture and used with impunity as an incontrovertible fact. The follow-up questions are equally horrific. Is this how Canadian intelligence agencies typically gather evidence? Are there any quality controls to such foreign intelligence, much of which is politicized and unreliable - and most of which is likely obtained by torture? Is evidence like this used to implicate non-citizens currently held in Canada under security certificates?

All this begs another question: Are Canadian security agencies subcontracting torture against Canadian citizens? As Lorne Waldman, Arar's lawyer, put it: "This is the first time my government is implicated in inflicting torture on another person. It appears that our Canadian security services are prepared to use rogue states like Syria to do what they are legally barred to do in Canada - torture in order to extract information and confessions."

Waldman's thesis may be quite credible if one assumes that Canadian intelligence had foreknowledge of the US practice of "extraordinary rendition," where suspects are tuned over to foreign intelligence

services and face likely torture. Admissions by US officials, recently quoted in the Washington Post, indicate that the Arar case fits the profile of covert CIA "extraordinary rendition."

The Post quoted a senior US intelligence official who noted that there have been "a lot of rendition activities" since 9/11 and that, "We are doing a number of them, and they have been very productive." "The temptation," noted other officials, "is to have these folks in other hands because they have different standards." "Someone might be able to get information we can't from detainees."

Arar also spoke about the case of another Canadian, Abdullah alMalki, who has reportedly been severely tortured in Syria, denied his basic rights, not charged, detained for a year and a half and denied consular access. What, one wonders, was the RCMP and CSIS involvement in his case and in the cases of other Canadians detained abroad?

If Canada wants to retain its stature as a country that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, it must come clean about the involvement of the RCMP and CSIS in the year-long suffering of Maher Arar.

Perhaps nothing can give Maher Arar his life back and perhaps nothing will be able to heal the wounds, physical and emotional, that he suffered over the last year. But Canada has a moral duty to Maher Arar to provide him with answers and a duty to all Canadians to ensure that this nightmare is not inflicted on anyone else.

The best hope, for Arar and for all Canadians, continues to be an independent public inquiry. Nothing short of such an inquiry should be acceptable. Arar described his cell of 10 months as a "grave." Lets hope that Canada does not seal his chance to live again by denying him the answers he so needs.

DATE

November 1st 2003

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

The head-scratching of civilizations

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

While attending a wedding in Lahore, Pakistan, a while back, I got into a heated discussion with a cousin about the dysfunction of so many Muslim countries. I pointed to Lahore's Gadhafi Stadium as an example of our skewed moral compass. "How can Pakistan name a stadium after someone who has wreaked so much havoc on so many?" My cousin replied with emotion, "Moammar Gadhafi came for an official visit. We honoured him. He's done a lot for his people. Besides, he is the only Muslim leader who stands up to the United States! In our eyes, he is a hero."

My cousin was a medical student, not particularly religious. I couldn't reconcile his anger towards America on one hand, with his effusive appreciation for the Harvard medical school polo shirt I had brought him as a gift - he hated America, yet loved her schools.

This love-hate relationship is finally being taken seriously by the American government. On Oct. 1, Congress unveiled an 85-page report, "Changing Minds, Winning Peace" -- the culmination of a five-month study of opinions in the Muslim world. An earlier poll by the Pew Center for Research had shown that "the bottom has fallen out of Arab and Muslim support for the United

States." The inquiry aimed to find out why, what to do about it, and how to marginalize the appeal of extremists.

Muslims in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, Pakistan and Indonesia expressed a desire for social justice, a fair judiciary, honest multiparty elections, and freedom of the press, of religion and of expression. They admired American entrepreneurship, its democratic and educational institutions and its adherence to the rule of law. If these results seem surprising, that's only because of our media's focus on extremist rhetoric and actions of autocratic governments -- neither of which represents the wider aspirations of Muslims.

The report marked the first time a genuine effort has been made by the West to listen to the public mood: "We have failed to listen and failed to persuade. . . . We have not bothered to help them understand us," states the report. The world can no longer afford such miscommunication.

Why the anger against America? Muslims are angry at Washington's support of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians; the bombardment of Afghanistan; and a decade of war, sanctions and occupation of Iraq.

Disappointingly, however, the congressional report advises no change -- not even reflection on change -- for U.S. foreign policy.

American support of undemocratic regimes in the Arab and Muslim world prompts many to believe that the U.S. wants freedom and democracy only for itself. And the report acknowledges that America is ambivalent about democracy if it benefits (i.e. elects) extremists. But this attitude implies that Muslims cannot be trusted to choose their form of government, while justifying outside intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. It also hints that the only acceptable democracy is one with an American hue.

Most of the report recommends ways to counteract anti-American propaganda spewed by extremists. The goal -- to educate Muslims about true American values, thereby "changing minds, winning peace" -- is laudable. But Muslims know too well the disconnect between American ideals and American actions abroad. Reinforcing the former without rectifying the latter can have the unintended effect of sharpening this contradiction -- playing into the hands of Osama bin Laden. We in the West, attuned only to his violence, are oblivious to the remainder of his message that speaks forcefully to the pent-up anger felt by Muslims about U.S. interference in their affairs.

Consider the startling Pew survey result: Significant populations in Indonesia (58 per cent), Jordan (55 per cent), Morocco (49 per cent), Pakistan (45 per cent) and the Palestinian National Authority (71 per cent)

expressed confidence in Mr. bin Laden to "do the right thing regarding world affairs." Some may dismiss this as a Robin Hood phenomenon -- the cheering of an outlaw who tweaks the hegemon's nose. But it is worrisome to see the moral compass skewed again, pointing to Mr. Gadhafi yesterday, Mr. bin Laden today.

The most puzzling aspect of the report is its abrupt dismissal of the popular opinion "We like Americans but not what the Americans are doing." The report's authors state, "This distinction is unrealistic, since Americans elect their government and broadly support its foreign policy." But most Americans elect their governments for domestic reasons; they're ignorant of U.S. foreign policy and its effect on the lives of non-Americans.

All of this is relevant to Canadians because a Commons committee is completing a similar study. Canada's peacekeeping efforts and international developmental projects have earned respect abroad, as has our stand against the invasion of Iraq. We are in an excellent position to help bridge the Muslim-American divide. Do we take this responsibility seriously?

DATE

September 12th 2003

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

Can there be Islamic democracy?

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

Some in the West say Islam and democracy cannot co-exist. Some Muslims feel the same way. But people like Osama bin Laden don't offer alternate visions of governance; they're not interested in building states, but destroying them. Meanwhile, hundreds of years of Islamic culture say that democracy and Islam are compatible -- provided democracy is rooted in Islamic values.

Developing such a democracy is also the vision of Noah Feldman, a New York University law professor and author of *After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy*, currently an adviser appointed by the Bush administration to help set up the interim Iraqi governing council. Prof. Feldman points out that Judaism and democracy co-exist in the state of Israel; true, there are tensions, but they are creative tensions.

Muslim scholars and intellectuals of diverse backgrounds agree that Islam emphasizes certain fundamentals of governance -- justice, human dignity and equality, the rule of law, the role of people in selecting their leaders, the obligation of consultative government, and the value of pluralism. Clearly, these elements are lacking in many Muslim countries. But a sweeping new international poll shows that a majority of Muslims believe that their

political institutions must become more democratic, even as they find a greater role for religious leaders.

From April 28 to May 15, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press surveyed the political, social and religious attitudes of Muslims in 14 countries -- Mali, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Senegal, and the Ivory Coast. Interestingly, the Egyptian government did not permit survey questions pertaining to democracy.

Majorities of Muslims in nine countries want Islam to play a large role in politics, while a slim majority favours the opposite in Lebanon, Turkey, Senegal and Uzbekistan.

In countries where Muslims support a greater role for Islam in politics, people also told pollsters that they valued freedom of speech, freedom of the press and free elections. Majorities also place high importance on the freedom to openly criticize the government, judicial systems that treat everyone the same, and honest multiparty electoral systems -- ideals that are in harmony with Islamic values. (Jordan, a monarchy with a limited parliament, is an exception; less than one-third expressed support for such freedoms.)

When asked about what kind of leadership they would trust, most of those surveyed preferred a democratic government to a strong autocratic leader (the exceptions were Jordan, Uzbekistan and Nigeria). The Uzbekistan view that a strong central authority is the best form of governance was in line with other post-Soviet-bloc nations (Russia and Ukraine).

But for those who favoured democracy, the question remains: What kind of democracy? The Pew pollsters didn't probe the particulars, but did ask Muslims what they thought of American-style democracy. The result: Solid majorities in Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan and Jordan expressed dislike of the latter.

That's not a contradiction, even if some U.S. observers interpret it that way. The fact is, democracy comes in many forms. But the practical question remains: How can Muslims combine democratic ideals with the strong presence of their faith? In secular democracies that strictly separate church and state, this may seem impossible. But if you look back at Islamic governance over 14 centuries, you find a system akin to constitutional democracy serving as the foundation of certain states. The norms of the Koran and the sunnah (the authentic traditions of the Prophet Mohammed) served as the constitution, while bodies of independent scholars provided rulings in light of these texts.

The principle of public participation was enshrined by the institution of shurah (consultation), but such consultation could not contradict the constitution. Moreover, the constitution required that the laws be applied equally to both the ruling class and the ruled. On occasion, the ruler would disregard the scholars' rulings; at times, courageous scholars would choose prison over bending to tyranny.

Canadians should recognize aspects of such a democracy. We have a constitutional democracy, in that the democratic will (represented by

Parliament) is subject to the Constitution as interpreted by the courts, whose rulings are binding on the government (the latter may opt out by invoking the notwithstanding clause, but even that exceptional step is enshrined in the Constitution).

Today, it's a challenge to find one Muslim nation that abides by an Islamic model of constitutional democracy. Most are dysfunctional, with power concentrated in the hands of a few; little accountability of government leaders; and no checks and balances to set things right.

And here's another problem turned up by the Pew poll: While Muslims favour democratic elements in political life, Muslim majorities in 10 of the nations surveyed rejected the idea that Islam should tolerate diverse interpretations. Yet the view that there should be only one true interpretation of Islam is supported neither by authentic Islamic texts, nor by history. The concept of haj (pilgrimage to Mecca) has made the Muslim community something of a global village for more than 14 centuries. Writing seven centuries ago, Ibn Battuta described the richness of thought in the Islamic empire in his travels from North Africa to China. The fact that four major schools of Islamic jurisprudence have evolved is yet another sign of the diversity of interpretation.

This survey result is thus all the more perplexing. Does this mean that Muslims are looking for a central body of qualified scholars to provide one uniform interpretation of the religion? Whose interpretation will be taken as "true"? Will there be intolerance for differing interpretations? More importantly, does this imply that Muslim publics are susceptible to a demagogue who espouses rhetoric in the name of "one, true" interpretation?

One hopes not. Islamic thought has sustained and nourished a rich world of scholarly opinion. Muslims today must remember that.

DATE

August 27th 2003

PUBLICATION

EDMONTON JOURNAL

TOPIC

City's battered Muslims wounded by baseless allegations

By Tim Weiss (Edmonton member of CAIR-CAN's advisory board)

The Muslim community in Edmonton dates back over a century to early Lebanese immigrants who landed here. While growing in size and ethnic diversity, Edmonton Muslims have integrated into the web of Albertan society, contributing farmers, teachers, doctors as well as members of Parliament. Bill Smith, Ralph Klein and Jean Chrétien have recently recognized their collective achievements over the past 100 years.

Edmonton's Muslim community takes pride in the fact that it was on 101st street and 108th avenue of Alberta's capital city, that the first mosque in North America was established in 1938. The Al-Rashid mosque has since moved, and grown to become one of the largest Islamic centers in Western Canada, housing not only a prayer area, but also a school, a youth centre and a gymnasium.

It was in this gymnasium that I found myself on the night of September 11th 2001 sitting at a round table with over 50 other saddened, scared and confused faces from across the city. While barely having enough time to digest the tragedy that unfolded that morning, the community was bracing itself for being held collectively responsible for the vicious attacks in New York City. It was in part due to the long roots that

Muslims have in this city that led to an unexpected reaction by Edmontonians. Instead of being blamed for the attacks, overwhelmingly the initial response post-September 11th was an outpouring of support. Letters and phone calls came in to all of the Islamic organizations across the city offering understanding and a desire to strengthen relationships.

Unfortunately, as the days and weeks wore on, and as the bombardment of negative images of Islam and Muslims flooded the newspapers and televisions, the backlash that was felt across the United States and Canada eventually reached Edmonton. Threatening phone calls and emails that had been initially rare became more frequent while racist comments and acts of vandalism were reported citywide.

It has taken two years of open houses, information sessions, public dinners, press releases and interviews explaining Islam and condemning terrorism to simply attempt to regain our innocence for a crime we did not commit.

Allegations and suspicions made in the public arena are very difficult to undo and more difficult to overcome - regardless of the poverty of their basis. It is for this reason

that Edmonton's Muslim community was baffled and disappointed to read in the Journal about defamatory statements made by the Toronto-based Mackenzie Institute that alleged the Al-Rashid mosque has links to extremism.

The so-called "proof": the Al-Rashid mosque is listed in the index of all Canadian Islamic centers on the Canadian website of the Muslim World League. After reading the article, anyone with access to the Internet could quickly see that there is no claim of affiliation between the hundreds of listed organizations and the website hosts. Even Canadian government departments are listed.

The Mackenzie Institute did not make its report available to the public and has refused to provide a copy to officials of Al-Rashid mosque who were faced with a serious allegation suddenly being printed citywide, based on nothing more than a list on the Internet. Given the vast and uncontrolled nature of the Internet, the emptiness of this claim is self-evident. Nonetheless, the fact that it was printed inevitably has real consequences for ordinary Canadian Muslims, calling into question our reputation and integrity.

Khalid Tarabain, the mosque's president, has categorically denied any such links. Unfortunately, mud is easier to sling than it is to wash off. The Muslim community in this city can only hope that our long lineage in Edmonton and our contributions here speak louder than baseless allegations coming from Toronto.

The doors of the Al-Rashid mosque, as well the other mosques citywide, remain open to our Edmontonian friends and neighbours to spread peace, tolerance and understanding. Together, we need to nurture the trust, goodwill and harmonious relations amongst all members of the Edmonton community.

DATE

August 1st 2003

PUBLICATION

TORONTO STAR

TOPIC

Canadian civil rights under siege

By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)

Solicitor General Wayne Easter recently admitted that he is unable to discount the possibility that elements in the RCMP passed on information to the Americans that led to the deportation of Canadian citizen Maher Arar to Syria and the corresponding deprivation of many of his legal rights.

We are learning the hard way that state power is not benign.

Modern political thought has seen an evolution from Hobbes' leviathan-state, where individuals give over their liberties for social order, to a constitutional state, where certain rights and freedoms are not on the table or up for grabs.

The great balancing act is to keep the state robust enough to protect and serve, but also to keep it from infringing on the rights of its citizens — to feed it, but not surrender to its gluttony. The state is a greedy beast: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will."

And so we are finding out. The RCMP's civilian watchdog, Shirley Heafey, says she has no way of knowing whether the RCMP is misusing its new anti-terrorism powers. Recall that after Sept. 11, 2001, Parliament

approved sweeping new powers for the RCMP, allowing officers to search homes without warrants, arrest suspects without charges and gain access to a wider range of personal information.

In the haze of political haste, we were told that there were oversight measures. Ottawa, for example, would produce a report on how it is using its new powers. Justice Canada's tardy report, tabled in early May, provides little discussion of the new law and has the imprimatur of "all is well."

But all's not well. Heafey claims that her office has received five formal complaints about the RCMP's anti-terrorism activities and that many other Canadians have told her they have been harassed but fear the attention of public complaint.

"We can't (investigate) unless there's a complaint, and even if there is a complaint ... we can't see the information," she said. "So for all practical purposes, there's no civilian oversight."

Heafey's certainly correct about reporting problems. Experts in hate crimes, for example, estimate that the incidence of non-reporting — called the dark figures — can

run as high as 90 per cent. It stands to reason that complaints made against the muscular agents of the state would be similarly under-reported. For a variety of reasons, including issues of confidentiality, safe space, and a previous political culture of non-reporting, individuals will not come forward.

Most of our incidents have come from grassroots reporting at community events or workshops on legal rights. And the tenor of the reports, especially when they concern the RCMP or CSIS, tend to demonstrate a rather troublesome pattern.

Some tactics are violations of the Charter of Rights: individuals told that there are a number of unanswered questions about them and that they "ought to come in" but that officers won't speak to them if they bring a lawyer.

Some tactics are sly and subtle: individuals visited by plainclothes (though clearly perceived by co-workers to be security officers) at work. One individual, for example, was visited at his school; another senior government engineer was visited at his place of work. Yet other tactics are misrepresentations of the law: Individuals hesitant about answering questions are told they can be "hauled in" without a reason or that they can be "forced to speak" under the new legislation.

In all cases, however, the perception, especially among the Canadian Arab and Muslim community, is the existence of a consciously applied double standard of racial profiling.

Much that occurs in the shade of the law takes advantage of legal illiteracy, the anxiety of being stigmatized after such a security visitation, or plain old fear. And the fear factor is very real.

Immigrants and refugees are usually petrified that when CSIS gives them a call, it is to become informants or suffer the consequences of an all-too-slow application process or a threat of a contrived problem with their security status.

The warning that sounds is not only that liberties taken are liberties lost, but that such misuse of the law is starting to generate a gnawing civic cynicism among Canadian Arabs and Muslims.

Networks of trust, so intimately constructed by day-to-day dealings, can be easily frayed and irreparably damaged. And, in an environment where security and safety have become basic public goods, trust between the citizenry and those sworn to protect them, is — and this is our new security/liberty paradox — becoming more and more essential to good policing.

DATE

July 28th 2003

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

**For the
children's sake**

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

Roberto Benigni courted controversy in his 1997 Academy Award-winning film *La Vita e Bella* (Life is Beautiful) -- a poignant comedy about fascism and the Holocaust in Italy. Mr. Benigni plays Guido, an Italian Jew, who seeks to protect his son from the unspeakable horrors of a concentration camp by using imagination, humour and wit. In particular, Mr. Benigni's remarkable facial expressions conveyed deep and wide-ranging emotions. Who can forget the sparkle in his eyes, the infectious smile, all of which exuded eternal optimism -- even as he marched to his execution. The charade was for the sake of a son, who never once understood the tragedy unfolding around him. And what father would not do the same?

Yet one can only wonder at the anguish felt by an Iraqi prisoner of war whose son is forbidden from seeing his face. The image was published early on in the conflict -- a child being held by his father whose head is covered by a hideous black hood. Both are in a PoW camp behind barbed wire. Presumably, the child can hear his father's voice, but is denied the intimacy of reading into his eyes, or sharing a smile. And one can only imagine what the child thinks, witnessing a symbol of authority, respect and love brought low before his very eyes. Why

add to the humiliation of detention by forcing the detainee to wear a hood in the presence of his son? What hope can be conveyed in such circumstances? While the Geneva Conventions stipulate that near relatives should not be separated in PoW camps, surely the spirit of the conventions implies that the parent-child relationship should be accorded dignity and respect.

International covenants regarding the treatment of children at times of conflict seem to have been put aside during the current war on terrorism. Last week, many rejoiced when Saddam Hussein's sons Uday and Qusay, were killed by U.S. missiles fired into a villa where they were hiding. But another person in the house, believed to be Qusay's teenage son Mustafa, was shot to death by troops storming the house.

Last month, *The New York Times Magazine* reported on the condition of juvenile detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. These detainees include a 16-year old Canadian who is alleged to have killed a U.S. marine in Afghanistan with a grenade. Three child soldiers, between the ages of 13 and 15, are imprisoned in Camp Iguana; the adults are in Camp Delta. But the Canadian youth, along with his 17-year-old brother, have

been detained in the adult camp, where, according to the Times report, conditions are harsher than solitary confinement. Notably, the Canadian government has not protested the treatment of this pair of Canadian citizens too loudly.

While all prisoners are reported to have access to health care, nutrition and full right to religious practice, the American administration has chosen not to designate these combatants as prisoners of war, thereby foregoing application of the Geneva Conventions.

Most troublesome is the condition of the juvenile "enemy combatants." The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC) specifies that detained juveniles shall have the right to legal assistance and to a court's prompt decision on their detention.

Instead, the United States has decided to keep these child prisoners in limbo -- indefinite imprisonment without access to a lawyer.

The 2001 UN Secretary-General's report, *We the Children*, highlighted the need to promote legislation and inclusion of child protection provisions in the statutes and rules of war crimes tribunals and courts. This recommendation was part of a larger list of implementations to assist young victims of war. War Child, a network of independent organizations working across the world to help children affected by war, has compiled mind-numbing statistics. In the last decade alone, 1.5 million children have died in wars, four million have been disabled and a further 10 million traumatized.

The poet William Wordsworth observed that the "child is the father to the man," implying that childhood experiences will shape attitudes of the adult. What does the future hold when we see a generation of traumatized children in so many parts of the world? In order to counteract fear and hate engendered by conflict, we must surely be guardians for children caught in the crossfire.

Ideally, this is the purpose of a covenant such as the CRC. When nations fail to exercise their responsibility, individuals can and must step in.

In this respect, one Canadian's initiative is worth noting. Twelve-year-old Iraqi Ali Abbas lost his entire family and both his arms in a U.S. missile attack in April. The photo of Ali, lying in a hospital bed with bandaged stumps is seared in the minds of many. Dr. Falath Hafuth, a father of three based in Cambridge, Ont., has decided to sponsor Ali and his guardian as refugees to Canada. Dr. Hafuth speaks daily to the boy who, not surprisingly, is angry with the Americans. Yet, Dr. Hafuth's vision is to nurture the child with the many benefits we sometimes take for granted: "My goal is just to educate him and have continuity of health care for him. I don't want that boy to grow up with hate. I want him to be an ambassador of peace."

Such powerful individual gestures are all the more urgent -- for the sake of the world's children.

DATE

June 9th 2003

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

The soul in science

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

Last November, while the world's attention was focused on Iraq, thieves stole a rare first edition of Isaac Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* from the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg. A few weeks later, police announced its recovery to an uninterested world. *Principia*, first published in 1687, is a key work in modern science. In it, Newton proposed the three laws of motion and the law of universal gravitation, foundations of physical sciences and engineering.

Less well-known is *Principia*'s final chapter, in which Newton expounded on his beliefs: "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being, . . . eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. . . . He governs all things, and knows all things that are, or can be done. . . . We adore Him as His servants."

While Newton's science propagated through time and space, his harmonization of faith and scientific inquiry did not. Instead, battles between Newton's persecuted contemporaries and the Roman Catholic Church left an indelible mark on Western thought, causing a dichotomy between science and

faith that prevails today.

Reconciling the two has never been an issue in Islamic thought. The Koran invites contemplation of the natural world, pointing to signs of a wise Creator. Nothing is left to fuzzy uncertainty, or in the words of Albert Einstein: "I shall never believe that God plays with dice with the world." The study of the world is a means to attain faith, as exemplified by the Prophet Abraham.

As a boy, Abraham observed the rising and setting of a star, the moon and finally the sun, each object more dazzling than its predecessor. He realized, like Newton, that no matter how awe-inspiring, each object had no inherent power but was subject to a far greater power. Empirical research and deductive reasoning paved his way towards belief in God. He also understood that it was useless to worship objects created through human agency, inanimate creations that could not respond to the innate spiritual calling of the heart. Some would argue that the West's infatuation with technical achievements is akin to the idol worship of Abraham's time.

The exhortation towards God-consciousness impelled the nascent Islamic empire to

learn from other civilizations, and to collect and translate works of the Greeks, Persians and Chinese. For 1,000 years, Muslims reviewed and refined prior thought, and -- remaining within the guidelines of Islamic principles -- established new frontiers in medicine, mathematics, astronomy and geography. The Muslim world was filled with universities, observatories, and hospitals, while Europe remained in the Dark Ages. Within Islam's moral framework, ethics and social responsibility intertwined with scientific inquiry.

As the empire waned, scientific progress shifted to the West. Today, Muslim countries are home to 1.3 billion people and three-quarters of the world's fuel reserves. Yet their combined GNP is less than half that of Germany; illiteracy levels are among the world's highest; and science spending is a meager 0.2 per cent of GNP. At a recent meeting of research ministers and academics in Trieste, delegates searched for the reasons. Some blamed governments that spent on arms rather than education. Others warned of excessive dogma. Yet others cited the lack of free expression and creative thinking in authoritarian regimes.

Yet in environments that prize hard work and ingenuity, Muslim scientists thrive. It's no surprise that a Muslim woman, Dr. Tyseer Aboulnasr, is dean of engineering at the University of Ottawa, or that Egyptian-born Ahmed Zewail, now of Stanford University, won the 1999 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

London-based intellectual Ziauddin Sardar has formulated a paradigm of Islamic sci-

ence in which God-consciousness leads to accountability for one's scientific activities. The scientist strives to use knowledge to promote social justice and public interest, and to avoid pursuits that lead to one's own destruction and that of the environment.

Such a model has implications for emerging technologies such as stem-cell research. Pending Canadian legislation forbids the creation of embryos expressly for research purposes. Only extra embryos discarded at fertility clinics can be used. The couple involved must give full consent; and no money can be exchanged for the creation or use of the embryos. The embryo can develop for a maximum of 14 days before use.

Islamic scholars issued an almost identical ruling one year earlier, based on Islamic jurisprudence and consultation with leading scientists. The additional requirement of marriage between the couple safeguards the family unit, while a two to three-day limit for embryo development has roots in theological texts.

This example suggests further exploration of common ground. The West can assist with technological transfer to Muslim countries; Muslim scientists can in turn help foster a holistic paradigm in which social responsibility and ethics are integrated into science policy. Perhaps scientists can work towards a much-needed symbiosis, rather than clash, of civilizations.

DATE

March 31st 2003

PUBLICATION

TORONTO STAR

TOPIC

The friendship card

By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)

Among the tired rationales for the war against Iraq, none is so grating than the argument that some Canadian public officials and notables have been trotting out recently: we should support the Americans because they are our friends or because, as our traditional allies, we have typically supported them.

The most recent statement comes from Ontario Premier Ernie Eves, who has written to U.S. Ambassador Paul Cellucci saying he and his cabinet are America's friends, even if Prime Minister Jean Chrétien is not.

Following Mr. Eves closely in this regard are Opposition Leader Stephen Harper and Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, who have condemned the Liberals for abandoning a long-time ally. And rounding out the list is the chief advocate of a 'jump! how high?' approach, former prime minister Brian Mulroney.

Without doubt, the fear of economic reprisal from the United States has provided the impetus for much of the current apologetics.

Comments have been coming fast and quick in the face of American angst regarding Canada's stand. U.S. Ambassador Paul

Cellucci told a Toronto business audience last Tuesday the United States is "disappointed and upset that Canada is not fully supporting us now" and said if the shoe were on the other foot the U.S. would be there for Canada.

Former prime minister Pierre Trudeau once likened living next door to the United States to sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly the elephant is, you can't help feeling its every twitch and grunt. Canada's dependence on the United States — 86 per cent of our exports are destined there — places us in a precarious position and makes dissent very difficult.

But, as author Naomi Klein reminds us, "All empires, no matter how mighty, are also weak: Awesome power disguises rapacious need.... We're not just needy but needed." Canada and Mexico, both conscientious dissenters in this war, together represent 36 per cent of America's export market - and 36 per cent of its net energy imports and 26 per cent of its net oil imports.

We're not as insignificant as we think we are. Tightly bound together, we have more leverage that we think we have. And Canada has broken, now and then, with official U.S.

doctrine. Vietnam for one. Cuba, another.

The idea of a friendship or allegiance that would self-servingly justify a war that lacks both international and moral legitimacy is not only fallacious (a teen would call it "peer pressure") but perverse. Worse still, is to frame opposition to the war as a sully of the Canadian élan or to lambaste those with legitimate objections to the war with, another logical fallacy, anti-Americanism.

Can true friendship stand the litmus test of knowing that the military campaign of your friend extends to a country where half of the inhabitants - some twelve million - are children? And that, no matter what sanitized military briefings tell us, the smart bombs, laser bombs, and other bombs cannot possibly distinguish on a ratio of one to two.

As if Iraqi children have not suffered enough. UNICEF estimates that some 600,000 children, 4,500 every month, have died because of sanctions.

War is hell. And indeed it is. For the child out there, whose humanity is made so distant by a profane discourse of "collateral death," could well be mine or yours.

Real friendship comes from moral maturity. "Help your brother, if he is the oppressed or the oppressor," said Muhammed once. The audience immediately responded: "We understand how to help someone who is oppressed. But how do we help our brother if he is the oppressor?" "Stop him from oppressing," Muhammed replied.

The text is significant and has universal resonance because it elevates that most noble social virtue — justice — beyond any confining identity. Justice, and justice alone, is most deserving of our allegiance. Securing a world of peace deserves no less.

Modernity is shrinking our world in time and space. A citizen of this new world does not only see his or her neighbour down South, but also the neighbour out East. As war surgeon Chris Giannou reminds us: Home is not a physical space; it is a moral boundary.

DATE

March 12th 2003

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

Why Muslims are angry: The impending invasion of Iraq is seen as a crusade against Islam

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

'A History of Terrorism,' the title of a current exhibit at Harvard's Lamont Library, provides much food for thought. Probing the maxim "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," it asks viewers to consider why relatively small-scale terrorist attacks are strongly condemned, while acts such as the Second World War firebombing of Dresden and the use of the atomic bomb against Hiroshima and Nagasaki are often considered justified.

It also reveals a strategy for future American foreign policy, based on a declassified 1948 document that was premised on the fact that the United States has half the world's wealth and only 6.3 per cent of its population. "We cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment," the document reads. "Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships that will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our nation's security."

Given the growth in that disparity since 1948, this strategy is key to understanding U.S. foreign policy during the past half a century. Among Muslim nations, the impending invasion of Iraq is seen in this light, as the first step toward increased American hegemony in the region, fuelled, Muslims believe, by the motive of controlling oil supply. There is further con-

cern that American policy -- both domestic and international -- has religious overtones.

Since 9/11, Muslims worldwide have heard influential American Christian evangelical leaders demean Islam and the Prophet Mohammed, with nary a disclaimer from the White House. Analysts attributed the silence to the Republican Party's need to secure the "religious right" vote during midterm elections last November. Indeed, after electoral victory, the White House issued a public rebuke against religious anti-Islamic diatribe to show Muslims that the U.S. was not at war with Islam. But Muslims also are keenly aware of the security crackdown in the U.S. that has targeted their community with secretive detentions, summary deportations and the profiling of nationals from predominately Muslim countries.

They have also seen the death of thousands of fellow Muslims in the aftermath of the U.S. bombardment of Afghanistan, along with the imposition of a U.S.-backed leader for the maintenance of American interests in the region -- namely, regional security and the construction of an oil pipeline through the impoverished nation.

And, for the past 35 years, Muslims have witnessed the brutal occupation of the Palestinian

homeland by successive Israeli governments, with full military and financial backing by Washington.

Many see double standards in the American justification for war on Iraq. If the goal is disarmament, what about North Korea, a nation with far more dangerous capabilities? If it is the flouting of United Nations resolutions, what about Israel, which has ignored some 64 resolutions (and counting) with U.S. approval?

The latest American case for war is to spread democracy. There is no doubt the people of the Middle East would welcome democracy, but most have been denied it by regimes many of which are backed by the U.S. And the people know their exercise of democracy is acceptable to Washington only as long as the people's choice agrees with that of Uncle Sam -- remember Algeria's 1991 election when Washington supported military intervention after an Islamic party was poised to take office?

Muslims' distrust of American intentions is strengthened when they learn that strategies for extending U.S. influence in the Persian Gulf were in the works well before 9/11. A paper prepared by the neo-conservative think-tank Project for the New American Century for the incoming Bush administration stated: "The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein."

There is widespread sentiment in the Muslim world that this war is for the strengthening of Israel, as part of George W. Bush's plan to remake the Middle East. Consider that, last month, The New Yorker reported on a policy paper circling amongst U.S. hawks, called "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," written in 1996 by U.S. foreign policy

analysts as advice for then Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The title refers to a foreign policy for Israel that would de-emphasize the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians and move "to a traditional concept of strategy based on balance of power." One key item in the strategy, the paper implies, would be toppling Saddam Hussein.

But the real heart of the anger felt by Muslims is the violence that has been, and will be, meted out to the Iraqi people. The equating of Islam with violence by Western pundits is seen as the pinnacle of hypocrisy when you consider that 90,000 tons of bombs -- the equivalent of 71/2 Hiroshima bombs -- were dropped on the people of Iraq in the 43 days of the 1991 gulf war, and that UN sanctions contributed to the death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis afterward.

As images of Iraqi casualties mount during the coming conflict, the resentment can only increase. With the current talk of regime change and occupation of Iraq, Muslims worldwide are reminded of the consequences the last time a superpower invaded and occupied Muslim land: the Soviet Union's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. After 13 years of bitter fighting and one million Afghan dead, the occupiers left when the cost became too high.

Many view the impending war on Iraq as a war against Islam. Last fall, a group of more than 200 prominent Muslims accused the United States of leading a crusade against Islam and warned that an assault on Iraq could provoke revenge attacks against Western targets.

"There is a feeling that we are powerless," says Tariq Ramadan, a highly respected Swiss-based Islamic scholar who has written extensively on finding common ground between Muslims and the West. "We can't speak about a 'clash of civilizations' yet, but the ingredients are there and, after an attack on Iraq, they will be stronger."

DATE

February 21st 2003

PUBLICATION

CALGARY  HERALD

TOPIC

Columbia loss no joy to true Muslims

By Laura Zajchowski
a member of CAIR-CAN's Advisory Board

"Oh no . . ."

As the words left my lips, I realized they were probably being uttered by countless others also mesmerized by the images of Columbia's final tragic descent.

As realization dawned that the fiery falling star represented the deaths of seven intelligent and dedicated men and women engaged in a noble but perilous quest for knowledge, I murmured a verse from the Qur'an that Muslims recite upon hearing of someone's death, "To God we belong, and to God we shall return." My thoughts turned to the pain of the astronauts' family and friends, and I prayed that God would bring them comfort and guidance.

In the wake of tragedy it is natural for us to turn to our faith for solace. Around the world, worshippers in churches, synagogues, mosques and temples gathered to reflect and remember. For most, it has been a time to express sympathy and honour those who died, regardless of faith or ethnicity. Muslims find the best example in the Prophet Mohammed, who stood out of respect when the funeral procession of a Jewish man passed. Turning to his companions he explained, "Is it not a human soul?"

In the same prophetic spirit of respect and compassion, Imam Zaid Malik recently told students at an Islamic school in Florida that they should be inspired by the Columbia astronauts who "gave their lives in pursuit of endeavors that benefit all of humanity. Their death is a tremendous loss for the human family."

Sadly, not all reactions to the loss of the Columbia are so laudable. Abu Hamza al-Masri, the infamous (and now former) Imam of the Finsbury Park mosque in London, was condemned by Muslims and non-Muslims alike when he told reporters that the incident was "God's punishment" because it carried a "trinity of evil" in the form of American, Israeli and Hindu astronauts.

In the Herald last week, similar comments by Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, and "various Palestinians" prompted Michelle Stirling-Anosh to argue that "the hate-filled Arab Muslim street" was delighted with the Columbia's destruction.

She went on to say the Islamic world and is characterized by violence, rabid intolerance of non-Muslims and the subjugation of women.

While I can only applaud her call to build bonds with people from different nations and cultures and respect diverse religious beliefs, her words make it difficult to live up to this ideal by perpetuating such hurtful and defamatory stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims.

Rejoicing in the calamities of others is forbidden in Islam, and it is deeply disturbing that even isolated Muslim voices would react in this way. However, it is neither fair nor truthful to accuse all Arab Muslims of this and worse. Many Arab Muslims were sincerely saddened and expressed their sympathy upon hearing of the shuttle's loss.

In Jerusalem, columnist Margaret Wentz was talking with Palestinians in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City when they heard the news about Columbia. In her words, "the Palestinians looked shocked and sad, and said what a terrible thing it was," as did Palestinian students at an elementary school in Ramallah.

Cairo coffee shop owner Yehia Mohammed Ali told the Associated Press the accident was "a loss for all humanity because these people served all the human beings by their science irrespective of which countries they came from." The governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait offered condolences, as did individual Iraqi politicians and the Palestinian Authority.

Muslims have always looked to the heavens and recognized in the stars a sign of God. The familiar patterns of the constellations reassure the believer that tragedy is not

meaningless when there is divine order, and that this too is in accordance with God's will. Many stars today still bear the Arabic names given to them long ago by Muslim astronomers who developed navigational techniques that guided humanity for centuries.

In more modern times, Egyptian-born Muslim scientist Dr. Farouk El-Baz taught the Apollo astronauts about lunar geology, and a Muslim astronaut, Sultan Salman Abdulaziz Al-Saud, flew aboard the Discovery in 1985. Past and present, Muslims too embrace the spirit of the quest for the heavens that claimed Columbia and her crew.

DATE

December 18th 2002

PUBLICATION

TORONTO STAR

TOPIC

How long must Muslims apologize

By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)

As Al Qaeda's spree of senseless slaughter threatens to continue unabated, Muslims everywhere find themselves bound to an unending logic of denial and dissociation.

Precisely because Osama bin Laden speaks in the name of Islam, Muslim communities have been galvanized into action.

If Muslims do not provide their own lived narrative of Islam, their faith will continue to be hijacked by a band of violent, narrow-minded bigots. Even before the events of Sept. 11, Muslims bore a special responsibility to represent Islam truly. For what is normative in Islam is, unlike the case with Christianity and Judaism, relatively unknown in many Western societies.

Christians, for example, never had to explain or apologize for the Christianity of David Koresh, Timothy McVeigh, or even the Christianity-laden pretext of white South Africa's apartheid policy.

Islam, still seen by many to be foreign and exotic, is known mostly through the prism of catastrophic events.

As one journalist pointed out, we only learn of Islam when there is a bang-over-

seas, or when the tectonic plates in the Muslim world start to grate and shift. Islam thus tends to be understood through the norm of the extreme.

The post-9/11 world has put a greater onus on Muslims.

Often, however, this has been a case for more than just great expectations.

Even though Canadian Muslims unequivocally condemned the killing of innocents in the name of Islam — a fact that was prolifically covered in the Canadian press from coast to coast — the charge of a complicit silence was frequently levied against them.

Muslims, it was alleged, remained silent and said little. A corollary, and recurrent theme, was that Canadian Muslims were slow to prove their loyalty and patriotism.

In short, Muslims were held to a more rigorous standard than their compatriots — and found to come up short.

They faced, as another commentator suggested, a "stiffer test of patriotism" than their fellow Canadians. And even with the prolific condemnation, it was at times

asserted that the dissociation was not true or authentic.

Rather, it was peremptory, even obligatory. Damned if you do, damned if you don't.

The bar of culpability seems fixed rigidly to guilt by religious association.

The blame game continues. Even now, with every new attack, pundits sit in ivory towers of self-righteousness and demand fresh new condemnations from innocent bystanders.

Many requests are so harsh, so venomous, that no amount of condemnation will ever suffice. We are witnessing, instead, the politics of ethical one-upmanship that asserts a quota on morality but, in reality, corners the market when it comes to moral chauvinism.

Rarely, for example, is the U.S. brought to task for creating the Bin Laden Frankenstein, supporting and arming him to the teeth.

Nor is Russia asked to apologize for invading Afghanistan, brutalizing it for a decade, and creating a climate of internecine warfare and extremism.

Or, for that matter, is Israel called on to rectify its brutal and morally unjustifiable occupation that provides fuel to these twisted conflagrations of hatred. Indeed, one detects through these omissions that the apportioning of blame to Muslims en masse has an ugly racial face.

When, for example, was world Jewry called to account for Israel's flagrant violation of

international law and, just recently, according to Amnesty International, its war crimes in refugee camps?

No matter what the future holds, Muslims must continue to dissociate themselves from Al Qaeda. For bad and worse, their silence is presumed to be consent.

Still, an appeal ought to be made for moral symmetry.

It is often forgotten that hundreds of Muslims perished in the attacks as well. The attackers were not interested in filtering out believer from non-believer.

And their actions ought to speak louder than our words of denial and dissociation.

We — that's right, we — were all the same to them.

DATE

November 13th 2002

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

**This way forward
for Muslims***By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)*

Crisis of the Muslim Mind. Ethics of Disagreement in Islam. The Islamic Awakening: Between Extremism and Rejectionism. These English translations of Arabic treatises are but a sampling of fundamental issues that have emerged over the past few decades as Muslim societies grapple with intellectual malaise, internecine conflict, and the dangers of extremism. Long before Sept. 11, Muslim scholars and activists were asking, "What's wrong with the Muslim world?" The consensus can best be summarized by the Koranic verse, "God does not change the condition of people until they change what is within themselves."

Classical Muslim scholars explained this verse to mean that God showers blessings upon people, and only changes their condition when they forget their humble beginnings, substituting gratefulness with arrogance. Thirteen centuries later, as Muslim populations emerged from colonialism, activists returned to this verse, albeit with a different take. Wretched conditions will not change, they exhorted, until people take the initiative to change their own condition. It was, in essence, a call to recover the dynamic Islamic tenet of personal responsibility for one's actions before the Creator. One of the classical writings on this theme

was *Shikwa-Jawab-e-Shikwa* (Complaint and Answer) written in 1912 by Muhammad Iqbal, poet laureate of the Indian subcontinent. In *Shikwa*, Muslims complain to God about their miserable conditions of poverty, illiteracy, and subjugation; all the while, they pray, fast, perform haj and recite the Koran. In *Jawab-e-Shikwa* (Response to the Complaint), they are told to look in the mirror, to see how much they have fallen short in living the essential features of Islam, such as truthfulness, intelligent inquiry and mercy. Dogmatism, hair-splitting, and hypocrisy are all condemned as attempts to replace substance with disingenuous form.

Iqbal's urgent call for reform seemed for naught as the Muslim world experienced two devastating losses during the 20th century: the dismantling of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, and the loss of Jerusalem in 1967. The former represented an institution of governance spanning 14 centuries, while the latter represented a spiritual nexus of worship, next only to Mecca and Medina. Today, many see the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf, the brutal occupation of Palestine, genocidal sanctions against the Iraqi people, and the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia as further humiliations.

While some seek to blame external elements, a corps of Muslim scholars and activists look to the internal: The wretched conditions faced by Muslims will not cease until there is a fundamental change from within. If Muslims are to emerge from their chronic instability, these scholars argue, faith in God must be strengthened. Self-defeating attitudes prevalent among Muslims -- reliance on conspiracy theories, blaming the West, victimization, nostalgia for a "golden age" of Islam, and the search for a saviour -- all reflect weakness in faith in God. While such an approach may seem arcane to the secular mind, the importance of the Divine in Muslim thought should not be underestimated.

Contemporary Muslim scholars have urged Muslims to do away with conspiracy theories. Echoing Iqbal, they point out that such theories serve to conveniently absolve Muslims of personal responsibility to change their situation for the better. "Why bother trying when someone else controls your destiny?" is the pathetic refrain.

This outlook further places Muslims at a psychological disadvantage, for it makes one's adversaries seem more powerful than is actually true. When one knows that all power belongs to God, the fear of one's enemies diminishes. The renowned Muslim scholar Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi advises that Muslims will not solve homegrown problems of corruption, illiteracy, and sectarianism by constantly blaming the West.

Malcolm X struggled through racism by taking responsibility for his own shortcomings and finding the fortitude to face future

battles, all within the moral framework of the Koran. In particular, one cannot use racism as a perpetual cover for one's own shortcomings. In today's post-Sept. 11 climate, Muslims need to fortify from within, and then face the challenges of Islamophobia.

The Koran also encourages people to look to history to see God's moral plan. Civilizations have come and gone; their destruction being a result of their own arrogance and moral corruption. Muslims are not immune to this paradigm; the golden age of Islamic rule gradually came to an end for the same reasons as the demise of other empires. Today, some Muslims look back to that age with longing, with little analysis of what led to ascendancy, and what led to decline. Nostalgia, without a moral lesson, leads to intellectual paralysis.

Over the past few decades, Muslims have looked toward autocratic leaders as saviours to lead them out of their current dilemma. Like the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, and the Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, they believe the only way to improve their lot is to place hope in some larger-than-life figure -- an Osama bin Laden, for example. Inevitably, they are disappointed. Just as the *Oz* characters discover their own heart, intelligence and courage, Muslims, too, need to uncover their own potential.

With the failure of pan-Arabism and communism, and the current antipathy toward the United States, Muslim populations are turning to Islam as the indigenous solution. The future struggle will lie in how it is interpreted and implemented.

DATE

November 10th 2002

PUBLICATION

The Gazette

TOPIC

Poppy: a perfect symbol in a 'disenchanted world'*By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)*

As the white fluff descends upon us early from on high, red poppies sprout from thick overcoats. November, the season of the poppy, might be a divine symbol of national Canadian resistance as we head into Winter. The poppy helps us bear the prospect of the great freeze-over: we remember life.

Most Canadians, of course, know all too well the poppies' real significance. We remember the brave men and women that fought and lost their lives in World War I and subsequent conflicts. Every year, their memory is honoured and rightly so. There is no more profound narrative for a nation than remembering tragedies incurred in the fight for liberty and freedom.

Symbols are arguably more important now than ever. We are living in a 'disenchanted world,' where horizons of ultimate meaning have receded to a techno-material world-view. Consequently, the need to strive to resuscitate symbols that provide greater meaning to individuals and collectivities.

But symbols can't simply ossify the past; they must provide meaning for new generations in the present. That the poppy has its symbolic referent to the first Great War is, I think, significant. War and peace are still

with us. The threat of war and conflict saturates our international political discourse. Realists argue that international interactions are still based on fear. The arms race, notwithstanding the collapse of the Soviet Union, has continued unabated for the last half of this century.

We've found conventional, chemical and nuclear methods of killing one another and elevated the security imperative high above fundamental needs. Consider that half of the world's governments spend more on defense than health care. And that world military expenditures in 2001 topped \$839 billion, while an estimated 1.3 billion people survive on the equivalent of less than U.S. \$1 a day.

Still, the slick rationale for war insists that aggressors must be ousted. And what of the consequences? The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates that one out of every two casualties of "war" is a civilian, mostly women and children, caught in the crossfire. Indeed, there are more landmines planted in Cambodia than people. And Cambodia is just one of the 64 countries around the world littered with some 100 million anti-personnel landmines, which cause 500 deaths and injuries per week.

And the last tired rationale, that conflict is necessary to preserve democracy, too, is suspect. The Center for International Policy estimates that around 80% of U.S. arms exports to the developing world go to non-democratic regimes.

History will teach us nothing, lamented one social critic. I'd hate to concur, but with statistics so stark, I feel the disconnect of the emperor with no clothes.

Just next door, our mighty neighbour prepares the public for another war. Drumming up support for a renewed assault on Iraq, the Bush administration exhausts every specious argument. The Washington Post's Dana Milbank writes that, for George W. Bush, "facts are malleable" and that statements on Iraq's military capability are "dubious, if not wrong." The CIA's former head of counterterrorism notes with greater candour: "Basically, cooked information is working its way into high-level pronouncements."

We're a stone's throw from war, it seems.

Winter will continue its inexorable march with intermittent strides of slush and snow. By then the poppies would have disappeared. But only from our lapels, I hope. Not from our hearts.

...continue from page 52

The group's U.S. advocacy director said authorities have used immigration charges to make an "end run" around legal safeguards. By holding suspects on immigration charges, authorities avoided having to give reasons for arresting them, bringing them before a judge within 48 hours and providing court-appointed lawyers.

As constitutional challenges slowly make their way to the U.S. Supreme Court, many innocent lives are being destroyed. Since Washington is not informing consular officials of detained citizens, who knows how many waste away in prison?

In the case of Maher Arar, our government needs to press Syria for his safe return. Parliament needs to begin a substantial debate on the violation of Canadian sovereignty by the deportation of one its citizens by the United States, in a case where the cornerstones of transparency, accountability and presumption of innocence have been discarded.

We need to resist the erosion of basic human rights in light of unilateral U.S. actions.

DATE

November 4th 2002

PUBLICATION

OTTAWA  CITIZEN

TOPIC

The Arar case has shown that Canadians can look beyond race and religion when basic rights are at stake

By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)

Multiculturalism has always been an obsessive feature of our navel-gazing as Canadians. As an official policy, it has garnered much praise and scorn. To some, it is a landmark, indicative of a collective will to both celebrate and transcend difference, a common commitment to growing older together. To others, it is a divisive social centrifuge that leads to a ghetto mentality. From time to time, the essential debate at the heart of multiculturalism --togetherness through difference -- ignites anew. How can we chart a future that criss-crosses between divergent collective identities, pollinates the best of interaction and transcends, with grace, the worst?

Ironically, as today's world brings us closer together, we've never been further apart. Racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are all a familiar, inescapable fixture of our post-modern identity. Hate activity against Arabs, Muslims and other minorities after Sept. 11 was, in many cases, an actualization of a pre-existing xenophobia.

In September, I attended the Metropolis conference in Oslo, Norway, which gathered participants from government agencies and diverse national and international com-

munity organizations across Europe to discuss "togetherness through difference." The vigorous debate on multiculturalism made it clear that countries the world over are grappling with the politics of difference. Despite the chagrin of some naysayers, Canada's secretary of state for multiculturalism, Jean Augustine, insisted that multiculturalism has worked in Canada, apart from a number of hate incidents after Sept. 11...

Critics of multiculturalism point to the fact that celebrating difference makes it difficult to forge common values. For some commentators, West is best and is synonymous with universalism. This analysis is not only simplistic, but mired in a form of cultural imperialism. The same, of course, holds true for those who hold the competing position. This camp eschews all self-examination, decrying Euro-centrism. Here, too, is a cultural imperialism, though more subtle and usually legitimized by claims to victimhood. Notwithstanding both these extremes, how does one forge common communities and, therefore, interaction beyond race, religion and culture?

Almost two months after the conference, the debate still surges afresh in my mind. The final conclusion, however, has been

clinched by the case of Maher Arar, a Canadian who was deported by the United States to Jordan and who now finds himself in a Syrian jail.

This case has generated a national outcry in Canada. That Mr. Arar was Arab and Muslim was insignificant. The public outcry was not confined to just those who share his faith or ethnicity. Canadians' outrage stemmed from the fact that the United States broke a defining feature of international human-rights law when it deported a citizen of another country to the place of his birth, where he would have faced foreseeable harm. More specifically, however, Canadians took umbrage at how Mr. Arar was treated.

He was detained through a secretive and non-transparent procedure. He was interrogated without a lawyer present. His lawyer said she was notified of his deportation and immigration on a Sunday afternoon when the U.S. authorities knew she would be unable to attend. Mr. Arar was allowed to call his family only after a full week had elapsed since his detention. His whereabouts were, until very recently, a mystery, because U.S. authorities have been thoroughly unco-operative about providing details of his deportation. In fact, at no point since his deportation did the United States ever admit that it sent him to Jordan. In what can only be described as callous indifference, if not the cruel conceit of a hegemonic state drunk with power, the U.S. allowed Canadians and Mr. Arar's family to labour blindly over his whereabouts.

Canadians have, admirably, taken up this issue seriously. If the popular media are a

gauge of public opinion, the response to Mr. Arar's predicament has been overwhelming: There have been several newspaper editorials in support of Mr. Arar. And his wife, Mounia, herself a Canadian citizen, has been the eloquent and often-invited advocate of her husband on television and radio. The pressure continues to mount. This is not an issue of passing fancy.

And this, for me, appears to be a solid vindication of the ethic of multiculturalism. Although we can disagree about the practical actualization of the policy, there is little doubt in my mind that the Canadian reaction to the Arar case demonstrates an amazing meeting of the minds. For as vast a vista as Canada is, our shared sacred spaces include legal beliefs that emanate from the wellspring of a fundamental and near universally accepted ethic: equality, the rule of law, procedural fairness, transparency, justice and compassion.

Bravo, Canada.

DATE

October 18th 2002

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

**Shafted by
the eagle**

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

Maher Arar is, by all accounts, a Canadian success story. Born in Syria, he came to this country 15 years ago, finished a master's degree and is considered an expert in the field of communication engineering. He has two young children, and his wife, also a Muslim, has a PhD in mathematics from McGill. Since 1998, he has made business trips to the United States without any border problems. This summer, the family visited Tunisia. Mr. Arar planned to return this fall to attend to business. His family was supposed to join him later.

On Sept. 26, en route to Montreal from Zurich, Mr. Arar was pulled aside while waiting to change planes at New York's Kennedy International Airport. Unaware of recent U.S. regulations requiring all aliens born in Syria (among other countries) to be profiled, Mr. Arar was fingerprinted and photographed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The INS questioned him for nine hours, without the presence of a lawyer, and accused him of knowing suspected "terrorists" in Canada, which he denied. It threatened to deport him to Syria, where he had missed military service and was thus in danger of imprisonment. As a Canadian citizen, he asked to be returned to Canada. The INS kept him in an airport

jail, then transferred him the next day to Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Center, where he was kept in solitary confinement.

On Oct. 1, Mr. Arar was given permission to make a phone call; he contacted relatives in Ottawa and asked them to find a lawyer for him. Until Oct. 1, Mr. Arar's relatives had no idea of his whereabouts. They contacted the Canadian government, which, in turn, queried U.S. authorities, who informed the Canadian consulate in New York of Mr. Arar's imprisonment. To its credit, the consulate filed an official protest with the U.S. government for its failure to immediately inform Canadian officials of the detention of a Canadian citizen, in apparent violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

Canadian officials visited Mr. Arar on Oct. 3, and reported that his emotional state was fragile. The previous day, Mr. Arar had been charged with three counts of immigration violations, and one count of belonging to a terrorist organization. He adamantly denied the latter.

On Oct. 9, the INS moved Mr. Arar to an undisclosed location, without notifying Canadian officials.

The next day, without a trial, access to a lawyer or presentation of evidence, Mr. Arar was deported to Syria due to an immigration violation.

While the most severe penalty for immigration violation under U.S. law is deportation, international human-rights laws stipulate that the deportee must be returned to either his country of citizenship or origin of travel. In this case, Mr. Arar should have been deported to Canada or Zurich.

There have been other disturbing cases of Canadian citizens being held without charge in the post-9/11 U.S. justice system.

Unsir Hafeez and Reza Zazai (originally from Pakistan and Afghanistan, respectively) were arrested Sept. 10 on immigration charges and held for suspected terrorist links, which have not yet been proved. Mr. Zazai's lawyer indicated that this case involves serious constitutional violations of the rights of a Canadian citizen, and while the INS has the right to charge him with an immigration violation, it does not have the right to engage in preventive detention. The U.S. government has yet to produce evidence to link Mr. Zazai to terrorism. Like Mr. Arar, the two were going about their lives until they were detained by the Americans. Unlike Mr. Arar, the two were fortunate to have access to a lawyer.

This summer, Shakir Baloch, a Pakistan-born doctor with Canadian citizenship, was returned to Canada after an enduring a six-month nightmare. Caught in the post-9/11 immigration sweep, he was held in a maximum security prison for four months without charge and barred from contacting his wife in Toronto. The INS refused to honour a deportation order issued the day after his arrest. Mr. Baloch was confined to his cell 23 hours a day; during the other hour, he was allowed to exercise while shackled. As

with Mr. Arar, Canadian officials were tipped when family members asked for help, rather than being informed by U.S. authorities. Despite diplomatic protests, Mr. Baloch was held without charge and released only after receiving clearance by the FBI.

Then there is the case of student Mohammed Jabarah, a 20-year-old Canadian citizen who took a brief trip across the border (at the behest of CSIS) to help U.S. officials investigate an alleged terrorist plot. He was promptly jailed without charge.

Most troublesome was how the Canadian government, through CSIS, facilitated the transfer of Mr. Jabarah. First detained in Oman, he returned to Canada accompanied by CSIS officials and was questioned here before being moved to the United States. None of the powers of the government's new antiterrorism legislation, including preventive arrest and compulsory testimony, were used against him. Instead, CSIS abetted an arrangement that left a Canadian citizen in a foreign jail, out of the reach of his family and outside the protection of his own government.

On Aug. 15, Human Rights Watch, a private New York-based human-rights monitor, issued a scathing report charging that U.S. authorities deliberately trampled constitutional rights after Sept. 11 in a crackdown that saw immigrants jailed without cause, tried in secret and, in some cases, physically abused. It accused the Bush administration of displaying "a stunning disregard for the democratic principles of public transparency and accountability" in its response to the terrorist attacks. "The country has witnessed a persistent, deliberate and unwarranted erosion of basic rights against abusive governmental power."

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DATE

September 18th 2002

PUBLICATION

The Gazette

TOPIC

**Testing tolerance
in Quebec schools***By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)*

Serious questions about the rights of religious minorities in Quebec's public schools overshadow this fall's back-to-the-books rituals for some students and their parents. At issue is the Quebec government's decision to appeal a recent court-mediated compromise permitting a Sikh boy, Gurbaj Singh, to wear his kirpan to school. The Marguerite Bourgeoys School Board has also filed an appeal, in spite of the fact that Gurbaj has chosen to attend a private school that allows him to wear his kirpan.

Ostensibly, the reason for seeking the ban is safety. About 40 Sikh students wear kirpans in Montreal area schools, and yet not a single incident of a Sikh using it as a weapon has been reported. Recent judgments in Ontario, Alberta and B.C., as well as in the U.S. and Europe have allowed kirpans. In face of this evidence, are we to conclude that Quebec schools are more prone to violence than those elsewhere? That the precautions taken to sheath the kirpan are insufficient here?

The heart of the matter has to do with Quebec's uncompromising secularist education policy. The fact that schools across Canada have welcomed children with kirpans without incident isn't the point,

according to François Aquin, lawyer for the school board. "Maybe we're more secular here in Quebec in our approach to education," Aquin told reporters. "It's very important to respect people's beliefs, but also the beliefs of other people who want schools to be secular. We can't have a rule so important as no weapons in schools interpreted in two ways - for some, yes, for others, no."

The board and the PQ government have decided to impose the view that the kirpan is most definitely a weapon - in spite of attempts by Sikhs to educate officials otherwise. The message to students is chilling: education is not a means to explore diversity and find ways of living together, but rather a tool to inculcate that which is truly "Québécois," and that which is not.

Quebec Muslims remember all too painfully similar attacks on their faith, and should be on the alert for a reversal of prior accommodations. In the fall of 1994, 13-year-old Emilie Ouimet was sent home from her public high school for wearing an Islamic headscarf (hijab). The principal stated that the school forbade hats and any apparel that signified membership in an identifiable group or gang. A few months later, Dania

Bali faced the same ultimatum at her private school where she had been a straight-A student.

Other female students were subject to interrogations by school administrators about their motives for wearing the hijab. Modesty in dress became the target of an inquisition. By early 1995, some Muslim parents were getting letters from school officials requesting that their able-bodied children not observe the Ramadan fast. Throughout this, the PQ government remained curiously silent.

Following these incidents, the Quebec Human Rights Commission issued a statement in February 1995, titled Religious Pluralism in Quebec: A Social and Ethical Challenge. It emphasized that in the debate over the place of religion in public space, "special attention should be paid to the fact that tolerance and mutual respect are the most fundamental values in our society." The commission urged discussion and debate "to name the sources of unease first, in order to get past them and identify the conditions of the 'desire to live together.'"

The Quebec government has decided to abandon both the spirit and the letter of the commission's guidelines. This sends a dangerous message. For if a principal can impose the decision that a kirpan is weapon, what is to prevent him from imposing the judgment that a hijab is a hat that violates school policy for gang identification?

The most obvious contradiction of Quebec's education policy is that secularity is imposed on non Judeo-Christian traditions. One has yet to hear of a student being asked

to remove a crucifix or a yarmulke. This further implies a hierarchy of citizenship: observant Jews and Christians have full rights to religious apparel, whereas observant Muslims, Sikhs and others do not.

Before the rest of Canada gets too smug about double standards in Quebec, it should remember that recently, Sikhs were forbidden to enter Legion Halls with their turbans, and a Muslim chaplain was asked to remove his Islamic cap (kufi) in an Ontario courtroom where yarmulkes had been permitted. Since 9/11, incidents of intolerance against Muslims, Arabs and South Asians have gone up.

Those involved in anti-racism efforts know that education is the key. It seems that priority should be given to the education of educators.

DATE

September 12th 2002

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

Don't shackle us to 9/11

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

Verily, with hardship, comes ease.
Indeed, verily with hardship, comes ease.

Koran, Surah 94, Verses 5-6

These verses from the Koran are most apt to describe the reality of the past year for Canadian Muslims, and the guarded optimism of those with faith.

Since 9/11/01, many Canadian Muslims have experienced what can best be described as their annus horribilis. The events of that fateful day were traumatic enough -- defenseless civilians of every faith, age and race, mercilessly slaughtered while going about their daily routines in the heart of North America. Canadian Muslims, like everyone else, were horrified and fearful. However, the brief unity in grief soon gave way to fearful isolation, once it became known that the perpetrators committed this heinous act in the name of Islam.

Canadians of the Muslim faith instinctively knew that they would become the subject of collective guilt in their own country. Many took precautions by keeping their children home from school, staying out of the public eye and contacting the police for protection for Muslim institutions.

Community organizations, individuals, and imams, all condemned 9/11 in the strongest possible terms as antithetical to Islam. Still, that did not stop those committed to venting their blind anger. Taunts, threats, physical assaults and vandalism against personal property and Muslim institutions were recorded by police units across the country within the first months after 9/11.

Last week, the Council on American-Islamic Relations Canada (CAIR-CAN) released the results of a poll about how Canadian Muslims have fared in the year since that fateful day. Of nearly 300 respondents, 60 per cent indicated that they had been subject to some form of discrimination or bias, while 80 per cent indicated they knew of someone else who had been subject to the same.

As the spike in documented hate crimes faded after two months, Canadian Muslims felt a more insidious form of discrimination: that of a community under suspicion. A few media commentators brazenly categorized Muslims as a "fifth column," hiding sleeper cells amongst their midst. Others questioned their loyalty as Canadian citizens. Bordering on hate literature, some columns and national editorials dehumanized Muslims as a barbaric, murderous people.

The erosion of civil rights, particularly of Canadians of the Muslim faith, also weighed heavily in the minds of a fearful community. High profile cases of Muslims in Canada accused of aiding and abetting al-Qaeda further added to the anxiety.

Trial by media, guilt by religious identity, seemed to be the norm as the Canadian public was treated to a spectacle of Muslims paraded by the RCMP as "prime suspects": a Canadian NSERC nuclear engineer of Egyptian origin whose alleged wrongdoing was based on having a name similar to that of lead hijacker Mohamed Atta; an Ottawa man originally from Somalia who managed wire transfers for Canadians sending money to support their families in Somalia; a Toronto copy shop owner who was also the uncle of the infamous Nabil al-Marabh. Full of sound and fury, these dramatic announcements were found later to signify nothing. Lives had been devastated by irresponsible actions of the media and the RCMP.

Despite these glaring errors by intelligence authorities, Muslims have remained under a cloud of suspicion. The latest results of an IPSOS-Reid poll indicate that 35 per cent of Canadians are more suspicious of Arabs and Muslims from the Middle East, an 8-per cent increase since the poll asked the same question on Sept. 21, 2001. And 48 per cent of Canadians also indicate that they favour some form of racial profiling.

Perhaps the deepest offence, though, were the attacks against Islam itself. A few commentators have relished the opportunity to display their ignorance by imputing 9/11 to the Koran itself (even in the pages of The Globe and Mail, where William Johnson referred to verses of warfare as proof that violence is the foundation of Islam, and Margaret Wente branded the Egyptian murderer of El Al employees at Los Angeles airport as a "devotee of the Koran." Call-in

radio shows provided a snapshot of the mindset of a minority openly hostile to the faith itself.

Given this, will Canada's unique multicultural foundation be eroded as openness gives way to suspicion; inclusion replaced by enclaves of disaffected minorities; transparency of justice clouded by secret evidence and secret trials?

The events of the past year have forced many Muslims to explain their faith to the wider public. This is a responsibility that the community should have borne long ago. It has also led to introspection, and in many instances to a strengthening of faith and identity. And it has exposed fundamental differences within the community regarding interpretation of religious teachings and its role here in Canada.

Now, more than ever, Koranic words of solace, inspiration, and divine care are helping individuals cope day to day, combating uncertainty with unshakable faith, the cloud of suspicion with rays of divine light, and betrayal of confidence in human beings with firm reliance in the compassionate Almighty.

As Canadian Muslims look to the near past, they discover that many ethnic groups have gone through similar trials: Ukrainians and Poles during the First World War; Germans, Italians and Japanese during the Second World War, and Jews during the first half of the past century. By fighting discrimination, each group emerged stronger, with its role further entrenched in the Canadian mosaic.

Canadian Muslims must come to terms with the reality that it is now their turn. Will they fight discrimination and challenge violations to civil rights, thus contributing

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DATE

August 12th 2002

PUBLICATION

TORONTO STAR

TOPIC

Dismantling oppressive strictures takes guts

By Sheema Khan (Chair of CAIR-CAN)

A CLASSIC 1985 South Asian film, *Mirch Masala*, describes the heroic struggle of a young village woman, Sonbia, against misogyny and oppression in her society.

The main plot concerns the exploits of the local police chief, whose corruption and swagger hold sway over the equally corrupt and spineless villagers.

Sonbia repeatedly rebuffs his crude sexual advances. Unaccustomed to resistance, he threatens to wreak havoc on the entire village. Not one man comes to her defence — except for an imam living on the outskirts of town, who offers his mosque as a refuge to Sonbia and her supportive friends.

He further pledges to defend their lives and honour. He fights valiantly, and dies. But not in vain, for his jihad allows the women to launch a counterattack, leading to victory and vindication.

A testimonial to indigenous feminism, this cinematic gem is even more anomalous for its portrayal of the imam: A devout Muslim who stands up for justice risking his own life in the process. His is a rare, inspiring example against cultural misogyny. His bravery, along with the courage of the

women, serves as a catalyst towards dispensation of justice.

Last month, truth proved to be more poignant than fiction.

Abdul Razzaq is an imam in a remote southern Punjab village. He was the first person to voice public outrage over the local tribal council's ruling to order the gang rape of a local woman from the Gujar tribe by four males of the rival Matsoi tribe, as "compensation" for an alleged slight of tribal honour.

The New York Times reported on July 17 that, at first, the 11-year-old brother of the Gujar woman was kidnapped and sodomized by three Matsoi men, then left in a locked room. Police found him there in the presence of an unmarried Matsoi woman. Her tribe accused him of dishonouring her.

The local Matsoi council, or panchayat, made successive demands from the Gujar tribe as restitution, finally deciding on an apology by one of the boy's sisters on behalf of the Gujar tribe.

His eldest sister was chosen and dragged away to a hut where she was gang-raped by four Matsoi men with the panchayat's

approval. Her father was held at gunpoint during the ordeal and his pleas went unheeded. The poor woman was left to walk home half-clothed, before a "cheering" crowd.

Following this brutality, her family was intimidated, unwilling to file a police report.

The incident would have remained hidden, had it not been for the courage of Imam Abdul Razzak, who heard about the sordid episode. The following Friday, during a sermon, he condemned the incident, at great risk to his own life, saying, "Such a barbaric and oppressive injustice has never been witnessed before."

Local media picked up the imam's comments and the Pakistani government immediately investigated the incident. "A representative, consultative body, though illegal, sanctioned a gang rape," said Naeem Mirza, representative of a women's rights group. "It has shocked the entire conscience of a society."

This incident galvanized people to demand zero tolerance of tribal law by the government, which replied with uncharacteristically swift action. Eighteen men were arrested, with six of them facing the death penalty in a trial currently underway.

To serve as a deterrent, the government has widely publicized this case, sent armed guards to protect the Gujar woman and her family, offered \$12,000 as compensation and promised to provide electricity, paved roads, and a police outpost for the village.

More significantly, it will build a school named for the woman, who will also teach

there. Rather than ostracize the victim of a brutal rape, the government has placed the onus of shame where it belongs — on the rapists and the council. This is a sea change in attitude.

This latest incident of collective soul-searching follows on the heels of another outrage: The brutal murder of journalist Daniel Pearl.

Pakistanis from all segments of society expressed heartfelt condolences along with unequivocal anger, summarized by the following excerpt from one letter-writer to Pearl's father: "I am outraged, ashamed and humiliated (by) this evil act. The people responsible for your son's death might claim to be Muslims but they are actually beasts ..."

Abdul Sattar Edhi, founder and president of Pakistan's highly respected humanitarian organization, the Edhi Foundation, has joined the honorary board of The Daniel Pearl Foundation that aims to foster understanding between cultures.

Dismantling oppressive strictures in society are never easy. Nevertheless, unless individuals rise to the occasion and question injustice whenever it occurs, social transformation will always be elusive.

We should encourage such steps, not with a "West knows Best" attitude, but with the recognition that we, too, have faced defining soul-searching moments in the wake of human depravity. Let us reach out with mutual respect and the willingness to share in the common humanity that binds us all.

DATE

June 10th 2002

PUBLICATION

THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • FOUNDED 1859

TOPIC

Why we must say no to profiling

By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)

Native people and blacks have long complained about racial profiling. However, such profiling has always, at least publicly, been considered a moral no-no. But things are changing - a sign of the times, perhaps, given the brutality of September 11th. In this new zeitgeist, profiling has been endorsed by members of the security establishment, academics, policy analysts and even newspapers. All Canadians - Arabs and Muslims included - want a safer Canada and vigorous law enforcement. But is profiling the answer?

Apologists caution us that profiling is sorely needed to prevent terrorist activity. However, the evidence presented rarely rises beyond speculation. There is scant proof, for example, that profiling would frustrate terrorist plots and profiling only works if you fit the profile. September 11th was, in part, a failure, not of profiling, but of intelligence gathering. Profiling does not translate into acute and efficient security. And it would not necessarily make us any safer.

Moreover, our historical legacy in the West teaches that we should be wary of devolving power to State actors, and certainly not without robust checks and balances. In an effort to limit state abuse, to restrict arbi-

trariness, to accord transparent rights and duties, the rule of law was born. This idea - of complete equality before the law - has been a defining principle of our legal and social architecture. From it sprang procedural justice and the presumption of innocence.

If the State ever institutionalizes a policy of profiling or even tacitly accepts it - worse still: be perceived to tacitly accept it - the message that would percolate to civil society is that some people are more worthy of being given a thorough once-over and less worthy of being assumed to be innocent of wrongdoing. Indeed, abandoning the spirit of equality in matters of security will soon see its consequences bleed into the denial of basic equal opportunity for accommodation, employment, and services. Just recently, I was told by a landlord when I was looking to rent a home that I should understand if he feels reluctant to rent to me given that I was Muslim.

After lining up for a random airport security check on the way to the U.S., a passenger in line turned to my friend and I and said (with a sly grin), "You guys are the 'random' in the random check." We were. At least, my friend was, with his kufi, or headcovering. I found some perverse humour

in the encounter. Still, being the random element was awkward and unnerving.

Imagine, then, the effects if profiling became pervasive. It would stigmatize an entire community. Those coming from politically repressive societies and, paradoxically, finding refuge within Canada's admirable socio-legal tradition, will be doubly affected. Civic cynicism will creep in. Community and nation building will become ever more difficult when a group of people feels they are second-tier citizens.

Testimonials in the U.S. suggest this is happening. The U.S. has used profiling extensively since September 11th. More than 1,000 people, primarily Muslims and Arabs, have been detained without reason, some 5,000 legal Muslim visitors to the U.S. have been singled out for questioning based on their religion and national origins, and lawsuits were recently initiated against 4 major U.S. airlines for racial profiling.

Let's hope profiling is not in Canada's future. In a climate where Arab and Muslim hate attacks have been thoroughly documented by police services, and where there have been reported cases of profiling, it is critical that we come up with our own Canadian compromise that both vouchsafes our values and safeguards our security. After all, the slippery slope of racial profiling is not an abstraction; it's right around the corner.

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toward the evolution of social justice in Canada? Will they consolidate their tremendous reservoir of talent and values into instruments of change for the benefit of all? Or will they retreat into ghettos, contributing to the vicious cycle of mutual suspicions between "civilizations"? On a more sober note, what efforts will they make to forge opportunities for their children?

Social harmony, however, is a two-way street. And the results of the CAIR-CAN poll provide optimism: More than 60 per cent of Canadian Muslims report acts of kindness and support by their fellow citizens in the wake of 9/11. Numerous inter-faith dialogues, town-hall meetings, and open houses are evidence of the spontaneous outreach extended by other Canadians.

It is this wellspring of basic human goodness that must continue to flow for the preservation of social cohesion. The media have a tremendous responsibility in fostering understanding between peoples, without compromising their role as a forum to probe sensitive issues.

The pillars of Canadian society -- tolerance, compassion and fairness -- will be tested in the years to come, especially if there is another attack in North America, God forbid. Yet every Canadian must reflect seriously upon his or her role in shaping our society for the better, against those forces who desire otherwise. Are we, individually and collectively, up to the challenge?

DATE

April 10th 2002

PUBLICATION

OTTAWA  CITIZEN

TOPIC

Israel's myth machine

By Riad Saloojee (Executive Director of CAIR-CAN)

One ought to be wary of pictures, a social commentator once noted, for they cannot convey time or context. But sometimes there is nothing like the simple clarity of an image -- especially now, besieged as we are by the relentless discourse of Israel's need to "fight terror" and its need for "safety and security." (As if this newspeak is not itself sufficient to reveal the inner workings of a state obsessed with hiding its abuse of power. When Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon asserts that he intends to make Palestinians "beg for mercy," what other conclusion is deducible?)

The picture: two very young Palestinian children in the foreground and behind them the looming hulk of a tank. The picture is stark in all its allusions. It presents the current asymmetry of a conflict that has been sanitized in a million and one ways as a "war between equals" and never for what it is: a 35-year-long occupation against a civilian population by the most powerful military in the Middle East, the fourth-largest army in the world, and the largest recipient of U.S. largesse, replete with its modern armoury of tanks, Apache helicopters and heavy artillery.

The word occupation has become taboo.

Hardly ever mentioned now, it has been confined to a memory hole. Listening to the pundits and self-styled experts, you would think the occupation is irrelevant to Israel's current predicament. But is it so unusual, so irrational, that a legacy of violence begets more violence -- that a cycle of violence simply eats into itself? We don't live in a world of disembodied reason but in a world of real cause and effect, a world of social consequences, of history.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu observed during a Christmas visit to Israel on Dec. 25, 1989: "I am a black South African, and if I were to change the names, a description of what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank could describe events in South Africa (under apartheid)."

This was the first intifada. Not much has changed since.

Well, one thing has: Racist South Africa has been dismantled, so Israel can't be its military and political ally anymore. And from someone who was born in South Africa and whose family lived there for three generations, I am well aware of the logic of conquest: the targeting of civilians, the checkpoints, the daily humiliation, the illegal

assassinations, the curfews, the collective punishments, the military abuse, the torture and the dismantling of social and economic institutions.

I am also well aware of the steady export of propaganda to attain, maintain and retain illegitimate power. In an attempt to hold on to its illegally acquired territory and settlements, Israel has generated a steady diet of myths -- some so patently racist that they would make Hendrick Verwoerd, perhaps the foremost architect of apartheid, wince: that Palestinians use their children as "human shields"; that Palestinians, indeed all Arabs, have a pathological hatred for Israel; that Yasser Arafat, held up in a broken and battered headquarters without basic amenities, can quell all violence; and that Palestinians spare no stones in their attempt to push "Jews into the sea," and even use ambulances for violence.

This latter argument, the latest attempt to victimize the victim, has been thoroughly debunked: one by lack of evidence and, two, by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem. A March 14, 2002, report noted that it is Israeli Defence Forces soldiers that have fired at ambulances, killed on-duty Palestinian medical personnel, wounded several others and prevented medical treatment to the sick and wounded -- even leaving people to bleed to death.

The screw of the occupation still turns. But now, it is a renewed occupation. Says Zbigniew Brzezinski, former U.S. national security adviser: "The Israelis are becoming increasingly like the white supremacist South Africans, viewing the Palestinians as a

lower form of life, not hesitating to kill a great many of them." And the killing of civilians is just one part of the horrific equation. Amnesty International offered a trenchant critique of Israel's "flagrant human-rights violations" and cited the wanton destruction of houses, cars and buildings; the deliberate denial of food, water and medicine; the humiliating confinement and curfew of an entire population; arbitrary arrests, torture and other degrading treatment; and the closing of areas under siege to journalists, aid workers and humanitarian organizations.

Remembering the picture, I think of my own father, a son of South Africa's occupation, and how he left South Africa to give his children a better future. I fear that Palestinian children might grow into their adulthood, the sons and daughters of a renewed and reinvigorated occupation. And even if we had the power to end the occupation here and now, it's not enough. History will never forgive what was done to the Palestinians. And history will never forgive our role in it.

CAIR-CAN: INDEX

Number of action alerts:	128
Staff's favourite food:	Chocolate
Favourite drink:	Tea
Number of opinion pieces as of March 2004:	40
Number of opinion pieces published in 2003:	20
Worst newspaper:	We'll post it to our national list
Number of workshops delivered nation-wide:	More than 25
Number of lawyers on our shurah:	4
Non-lawyers:	Way more
Number of CAIR-CAN babies since the birth of CAIR-CAN:	9
Number of employees:	4
Dream vacation of choice:	Makkah
Size of benefit package:	Under construction
Total number of university years of staff:	23
Number of words in an average CAIR-CAN op-ed:	750-800
Number of address changes:	2
Staff's pet peeve:	E-mail spam
Average hate mail per month:	10
Name of hate mail folder:	"Mean mail"
Most fearsome shurah member:	Czar Abdul-Basit
Amount of money you've donated:	Could always be more





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