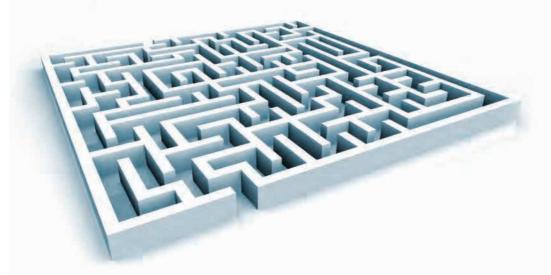


#### teens' crossroads



Published by MCAS Volume 24 Number 2 MCI (P) 123/09/2016 ISSN 1793-7752



# coming to think of it

- 6 ways to bring more empathy to the Internet
   The 'Muslim world'
   France's Burkini debate reverberates around the world • 12 tips for Muslim teens helping Muslim teens •
  - A crowd-sourced animal sanctuary in east Aleppo teaches compassion:
    - 'To love the small, weak cats is to love everything'



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# Common abbreviations

AS: 'Allayhis Salam (Arabic) Meaning: Peace be upon him

Other similar abbreviations: PBUH (peace be upon him), PBOH (peace be on him)

Usage: For the Prophets (AS) who came before

Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

RA: Radiyallahu 'Anhu / 'Anha / 'Anhum (Arabic) Meaning: May Allah be pleased with him / her

Usage: For the Companions (RA) of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

SAW: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wassallam (Arabic)
Meaning: Peace be upon him
Other similar abbreviations: PBUH (peace

Other similar abbreviations: PBUH (peace be upon him), PBOH (peace be on him)
Usage: For Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

SWT: Subhanahu Wa Ta 'ala Meaning: Glorified and Exalted One

Usage: For Allah (SWT)

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## Editor's note

Every morning, we wake up from our temporary sleep, and we look forward to what the brand new day has in store. We search for meanings in our lives. We learn, and also, get affected by other people's experiences.

Recently, our hearts break further with sadness upon hearing about the bombing of the animal sanctuary in east Aleppo, Syria. Earlier on, TC has planned to feature the article (on page 26) to bring awareness to the compassion that keeps that part of Syria alive. This latest damage to Aleppo changes the situation and

outlook of the animal sanctuary. TC decides to continue publishing the original article, with a brief update on the effects of the latest airstrike on 17 November 2016. This piece symbolises the reminder in this edition of TC - for us to not give up on hope, and to keep on raising efforts through peace, love, and mercy.

in the fight against fear, injustice, and extremism.

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Arabic terms have been represented by basic Roman alphabet, and their meanings briefly provided, to ease your reading.

For accurate pronunciation and detailed meanings, it is highly advised to refer to the original terms and specific meanings in Arabic.

TC contains some of Allah's names and Quranic verses.

Please do not dispose in the trash. Kindly keep, shred, or recycle the magazine.

Thank you for your kind consideration and gesture.

# TC

teens' crossroads volume 24 number 2 | 2016 www.mcas.sg/teenscrossroads

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Teens' Crossroads (TC) is published twice a year by MCAS.



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# Ta Ha

CHAPTER 20, 135 VERSES MAKKAH PERIOD

(Moses) answered: "My Lord holds the knowledge of them in a Record. My Lord never errs, nor forgets."

He Who has made the earth a cradle for you and traced out roads on it for you, and sends down water from the sky, and produces with it pairs of various plants.

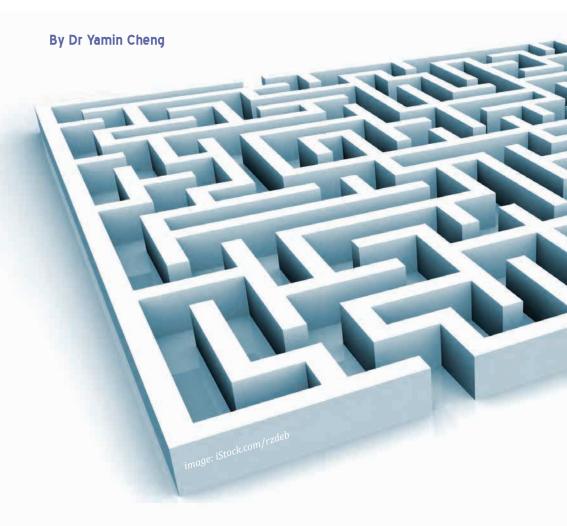
Eat thereof, and feed your cattle. Surely in all this there are signs (manifesting the truth) for people of sound, unbiased thinking.

From it (earth) We create you, and into it are We returning you, and out of it will We bring you forth a second time.

Verses 52 to 55 Translation of the Quran

# Life, coming to think of it

WHAT IS LIFE? LIFE, I THINK, IS A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERING, FROM CRADLE UNTIL GRAVE, WHAT LIVING MEANS TO THE TOTALITY OF OUR EXISTENCE.



#### **Bold and Free**

As human beings, we have desires, passions, and ambitions; we have dreams, wishes, and imaginations; we are not only contented with having enough to eat, a place to live, and clothes to clad. We want to probe into the deep end of the seas and oceans, construct skyscrapers that penetrate into the skies, and build flying machines that can soar into the seemingly limitless universe and to go to places where no man has ever been. As human beings, we have the tendency to

inflate our ego - to be bigger and greater than what we could imagine of ourselves; to control, dominate, and subjugate the world; and to decide and direct life's destiny. Most of all, we do not want to be told about how to go about with life, for that is up for an individual to decide. Life is about the freedom to make choices, not about the subservience to some pristine authority.

But as human beings, inasmuch as we are able to construct, we are also prone to destruct. It is indeed an irony that we are a creature of such nature, a paradox of sorts, that we take all the trouble to build a beautiful life, and yet, we can decimate all that we have built in just a short time.

We work together to transform

what is little into what is great, and yet, we compete

with one another to get possession

of what

we make, outdoing each other until only a handful is left to enjoy the cake. As individuals, we come together to make dreams happen, but we also envy one another so that the dreams we pursue together ended up as wishes for one's own self and less for others, and that is all that matters

Irrespective, we are a thinking creature, not merely a doing creature. We do not do things because we have needs to fulfill, gratifications to satisfy, burning desires to glorify. We think about the things we do, about the consequences they hold for us and others, about what they mean to our human identity, and about what it means to be a human being.

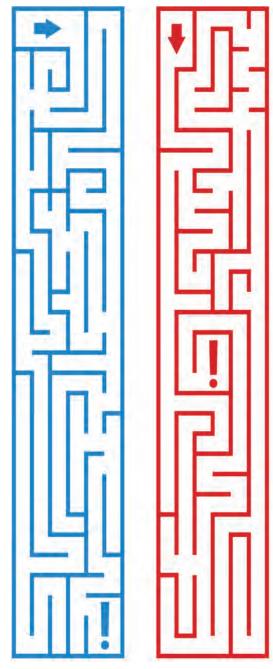
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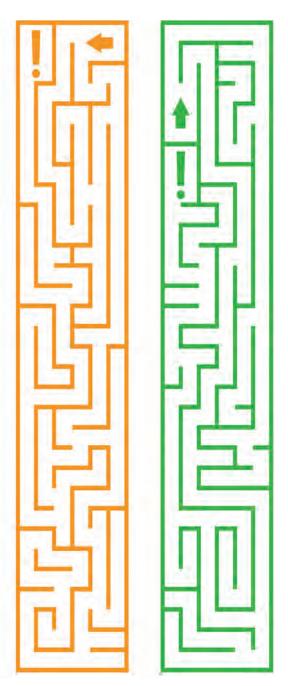
#### The Four Selves

When we come to think of it, we are an individual made up of four selves - a personal self, a collective self, a relational self, and a transcendent self. We are a self that when we look into ourselves, we see us, our fellow humans, the world around us that we call Nature or environment, and the sacred that for us Muslims, refers to God. Our meaning of being human thus comes from how we relate to God, Nature, other fellow humans, and of course, our very own self. We relate to all that are relevant to our self in a cyclical relationship. We start from our very own self, then move to our fellow humans, Nature, and finally to God. And from God, we move back to Nature, our fellow humans, and finally to our very self. In this cyclical relationship, we get to know who we are, what life holds for us, and what we are supposed to do to fulfill our human existence.

AS INDIVIDUALS, WE COME TOGETHER TO MAKE DREAMS HAPPEN, BUT WE ALSO ENVY ONE ANOTHER SO THAT THE DREAMS WE PURSUE TOGETHER ENDED UP AS WISHES FOR ONE'S OWN SELF AND LESS FOR OTHERS.

The most apparent thing about being a human being is to realise our self-worthiness, our worth as a human being. For some of us, it is about glory. For some of us, it is about being wealthy. For some of us, it is about religiosity. Thus, different people have different visions about what it is to be a worthy human being.





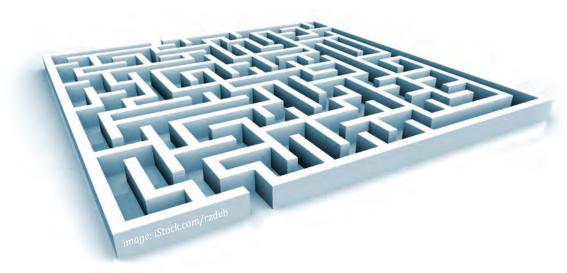
Notwithstanding, whether it is about glory, wealth, religiosity, or even power, none of us can deny that a worthy human being is one who, in benefitting himself, benefits others and, in benefitting others, benefits himself. He is one who, in enjoying life, others get to enjoy it too. He feels happy when others are happy, and he feels sad when others are suffering. He is, what Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says, that None of you can consider himself faithful to his religion until he loves for his fellow brethren what he loves for himself' Such a person is a person whose self opens to other selves. He is the gate through which love and compassion, sharing and caring. sympathy and empathy, flow through and light the hearts of others.

THE MOST APPARENT THING ABOUT BEING A HUMAN BEING IS TO REALISE OUR SELF-WORTHINESS, OUR WORTH AS A HUMAN BEING.

It is in the spirit of togetherness and belongingness that one gets to realise one's own self. Without this spirit, the person may just linger and stay with himself, not realising that by opening up to others, he is opening up to himself, enriching and enlarging his soul for his own good and benefit.

#### Our relationship with Nature

But togetherness and belongingness are not only with our fellow human beings. We have around us the world of Nature with the air that we breathe, the birds and beasts that roam the skies, the water on earth that we drink with delight, the



creatures of the streams and oceans that add to life's sunshine, and the green grasses and meadows that cool our sights. The wonderful world of Nature makes our life delightful because it is the source and resource for our biological needs. It is also the source and resource for our artistic imagination and expression.

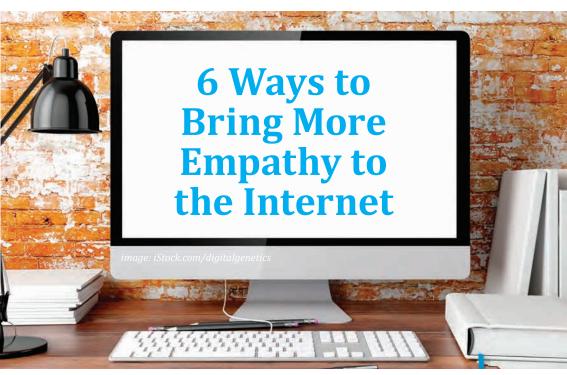
But most of all, it is the source and resource for our thought, belief, and action. The world of Nature is a little door that opens to another dimension of existence, namely, the world of the invisible and the origin of our being. In this sense, the world of Nature is Ayat, signposts that allude to the higher meaning of things.

The world of Nature enlightens our intelligence, arouses our passion for knowing, ignites our curiosity, and challenges our determination to transform the world into a paradise for living. And in the course of all these, we are brought back, through our enlightened intelligence, to a source that is the cause of all that is, who is none other than God.

NATURE ENLIGHTENS OUR INTELLIGENCE, AROUSES OUR PASSION FOR KNOWING, IGNITES OUR CURIOSITY, AND CHALLENGES OUR DETERMINATION TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD.

With God, we get to know who we are, why we are here in this world, and what is the destiny awaiting us after we die. We get to know that, with God, we know what greatness is and smallness means, to our life in this world. We get to know how we are related to all that are relevant to our life.

And we get to know the proper places of all that is in the web of relationship and how we are inter-dependent with one another for our living, meaning, and being human. With God, we arrive at the beginning and end of our journey of self-discovery. tc



By Liz Pleasant & Jim McGowan

WE ASKED PSYCHOLOGISTS, USER EXPERIENCE DESIGNERS, AND WRITERS WHAT WEB USERS COULD TO DO TO PROMOTE MORE EMPATHIC INTERACTION IN ONLINE PLACES. HERE'S WHAT THEY SAID.

Whether it is sharing cute photos of your pet on Instagram, posting birthday messages on Facebook, or starting your own video blog on YouTube, the Internet is constantly offering us more ways to connect.

However, all this interconnection doesn't necessarily result in a better understanding between individuals. Relating to others with empathy - that is, putting oneself in the shoes of another person to understand and share their feelings - is often more difficult to do online than in real life.

Hidden behind a screen, web users are not accountable for their actions in the same way they would be in the real world. Depending on where we hang out online, the people we interact with can be disembodied or anonymous, and this

can obstruct our ability to see things from their point of view.

As a quick look at the comments section of most any article on 4Chan.org will show, this anonymity has crowded the Internet with enough trolls to populate the underside of every bridge in Norway multiple times over - and has contributed to general online cruelty, bullying, and harassment.

A more empathic Web could help put an end to that. And research suggests that practising empathy leads to happier relationships and more satisfying lives, so more empathy online can benefit our offline spaces too.

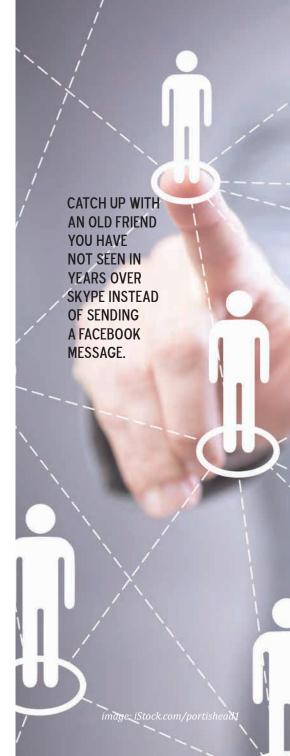
Luckily, there are many ways you can help build a more empathic Internet through your own interactions. Here are six ways to start.

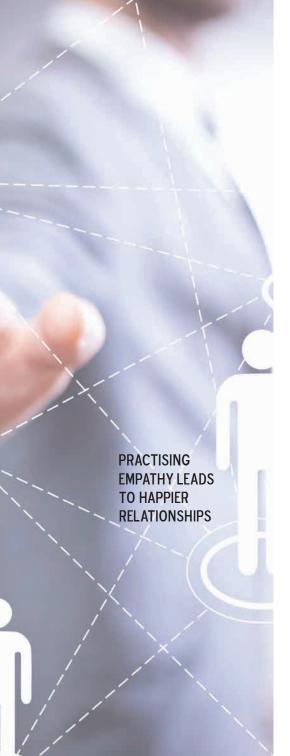
# 1. Use live video and chat whenever you can

As mentioned above, anonymity is one of the biggest obstacles to online empathy, says Roman Krznaric, a psychologist and author of 'Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get It'. "Psychologists call [it] the 'online disinhibition effect.' Basically, if you're anonymous and don't have to see anyone face to face, the social barriers are gone and you can be incredibly rude to people."

The disinhibition effect often appears in the comment sections of sites like YouTube and Reddit, places that are home to many exchanges between strangers.

"For users to form empathetic connections between each other, I think the more 'real time' the better," says Jessi Baker, a user





experience designer (http://jessibaker. co.uk/About-Jessi-Baker), who specialises in technologies that encourage empathy and environmental sustainability in consumers. "Having live video and chat features enables genuine conversations where empathy can exist."

# Participate in live chat events focused around a subject or event you're passionate about

Of course, not all live video and chat will lead to empathic interactions. (Chatroulette had mixed results (http://nymag.com/news/media/63663/) and ran into trouble with X-rated exhibitionism.) But there are tons of ways Internet users can use live chat in a constructive way.

Catch up with an old friend you have not seen in years over Skype instead of sending a Facebook message. Participate in live chat events on Reddit and Twitter focused around a subject you are passionate about. If you are considering taking an online class, find one that uses video. This helps foster a more personal bond between educators and students, and will probably be more engaging as well.

When done right, live chats remind us that the user on the other side of the screen is, in fact, a person too.

# 2. Use the web to branch out of your comfort zone

To get a glimpse into the lives of others, consider checking out sites like Humans of New York (http://www.humansofnewyork.com/). The blog features eye-catching photos of individuals paired with insightful quotes or snippets of dialogue. Websites like this enable users to see life from



the perspective of strangers and offer a chance to reflect on shared experiences. You can follow Humans of New York on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr.

It also helps to be more aware of the algorithms used by some of the world's most popular sites. "If we want to maximise the benefits and minimise the harms of connection, we have to take responsibility for shaping the tools we use to encounter the world," writes Ethan Zuckerman in his book 'Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection'.

Zuckerman discusses the dangers the algorithms used by corporate sites like Google, Amazon, and Netflix, which show users content based on what they have purchased or liked in the past. These types of filters make it increasingly difficult for Internet users to discover

content outside their pre-existing networks.

Author and activist Eli Pariser calls it "the filter bubble". While it is nearly impossible to completely break out of it. Pariser has a great list of 10 best practices (http://www.thefilterbubble.com/10-things-you-can-do) - most of them have to do with tweaking your settings on Facebook and Google - that can help.

Then there is good old serendipity. Follow links from pages you trust, and then follow links you find there. It is a tried-and-true way to discover information and people outside your filter bubble.

#### 3. Invest in content you enjoy

Though the 'like' button on Facebook often seems shallow, there are people out there working to give it more depth.



One way to do that is to get money involved. Flattr (https://flattr.com/), for example, is an app that enables users to give financial support to the people who make the content they consume.

Users select a monthly amount and upload it to their Flattr account.

The app then divides that amount throughout the month, giving an equal share to all things you 'like' or 'favorite'.

"Flattr is a 'Like' with real value," explains the programme's website. "It's about being a part of the creation of great content."

By involving money, Flattr allows users to be more conscious of their online actions and more appreciative of the humans who create their favourite content.

## 4. Document injustice and inform others about it

If you come across some form of injustice, document and share it. Doing so lets you harness the power of the Internet - particularly social media - to raise awareness of social justice issues both globally and locally.

Online social networks used in this way helped spread powerful emotions during Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring. Krznaric says.

"Someone could take a photo of a young girl being killed by Iranian state security forces (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/22/iran-revolutionary-guards-protest-opposition), and within hours hundreds of thousands of people around the world knew her name and were protesting in the streets."



This example shows how networks such as Twitter can generate waves of global empathy that might not exist without them.

Injustices can take place online too. If you witness cruelty in the online spaces where you spend time, screenshot it and send it to website hosts, school officials, or others able to restore justice.

### 5. Join the (book) club

According to a recent study (http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/comm.2009.34.issue-4/comm.2009.025/comm.2009.025.xml), people who read fiction tend to have a greater ability to empathise.

This may have to do with readers' skill at understanding characters' thoughts and feelings. Whether it is 'Twilight' or 'Jane Eyre', works of fiction require this ability granted, some more deeply than others.

Thus, virtual book and film clubs can be a great way to engage with others and develop empathy together. To get started, pick a book or film and organise a time and place - be it a live chat or real-time message board - for members to meet and share their thoughts and feelings about the material.

Need some inspiration? Check out EmpathyLibrary.com (http://empathylibrary.com/about-the-library). The website specialises in books and movies that bring you deep into another person's point of view, and is full of top 10 lists and tips for putting a book club together. Anyone can access the site's book and film recommendations, and if you become a member you can add recommendations of your own.

### 6. Practise self-compassion

Web users have a tendency to portray their best selves online. We celebrate our new jobs, announce our engagements, and post various types of food porn. But if you want real empathy from your friends and followers, it helps to show more than just your happy moments.

We have seen this in action in the days since the suicide of Robin Williams. Many were surprised that one of the most successful and seemingly happy actors of our time suffered from depression. His death has prompted others to share their experiences with mental illness.

Take comedian Chris Gethard, who posted a blog entry 'This Is The Face of My Mental Illness' (http://thechrisgethardshow.tumblr. com/post/94500709321/this-is-the-face-of-my-mental-illness). Under a picture he took of himself after a day spent "in bed, scared and crying," he wrote: "Up until now, there is NO way I would let anyone see this face." Gethard chose to share this photo of a challenging emotional moment so other people suffering from depression would not have to feel as alone in their sadness.

Sure, there is beauty in your duckface selfies and vacation snapshots. But there is also value in being open and honest with yourself, your friends, and your followers when challenging things come up in your life, and asking for empathy in times of need.

7. (Insert your way here.) \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways do you practice empathy online? Let us know by email to TCmagazine.sg@gmail.com tc

This article was written for YES!
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# How a scientist was moved by Islam

By Sharifah Nabila Al-Jufry

DR MAURICE BUCAILLE'S ROLE AS A SCIENTIST PAVED A PATH FOR HIM TOWARDS ACCEPTING ISLAM.



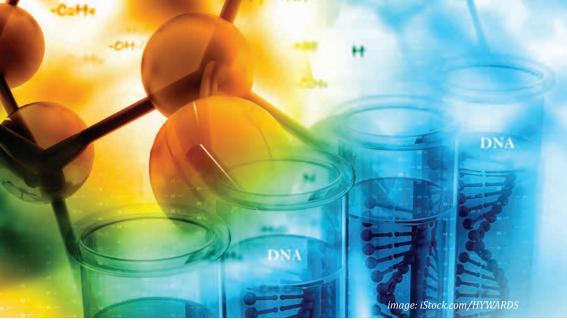
#### Archaeology study on pharaoh's corpse

In the 1980s, the French government requested that the body of Merneptah was brought over to France from Egypt to perform laboratory and archaeological tests. The corpse of the pharaoh or ruler of Egypt, globally known as Merneptah, during the era of Prophet Musa, or Moses (AS), was found in the Red Sea at a place named Jabalain in 1898.

Dr Maurice Bucaille, born on 19 July 1920, was an eminent French surgeon, who studied Medicine at France University. As a senior surgeon and head scientist, Dr Bucaille led a team in their study on the pharaoh.

#### Story of pharaoh

The word pharaoh refers to the king of Egypt in the ancient times. In the Quran, Pharaoh, or Firaun in Arabic, referred to the ruler of Egypt during the era of Prophet Musa (AS). At that time, Firaun tortured and imprisoned any person who refused to follow his order of accepting him as god.



As mentioned in the Quran,

"Said he (Firaun): If you will take a god besides me, I will most certainly make you one of the imprisoned."

Al-Shu'ara' (The Poets), 26:29

When Prophet Musa (AS) preached the Oneness of God to his nation, Firaun was threatened and thus promised persecution to the people who accepted Prophet Musa's religion of monotheism.

"And the chiefs of Firaun's people said: Do you leave Musa and his people to make mischief in the land and to forsake you and your gods? He said: We will slay their sons and spare their women, and surely we are masters over them."

Al-A'raf, The Heights, 7:127

As a punishment of Firaun's abomination,

Allah (SWT) caused him to drown in the sea with his disciples when Prophet Musa (AS) was guided to bring his followers across the Red Sea.

"And when the two hodies saw each other, the people of Moses said: "We are sure to be overtaken." (Moses) said: "By no means! My Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!" *Then We told Moses by inspiration:* "Strike the sea with your rod." So it divided, and each separate part became like the huge, firm mass of a mountain. And We made the other party approach thither. We delivered Moses and all who were with him: but We drowned the others. Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. And verily your Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful."

Al-Shu'ara', The Poets, 26:61-68

The same story of the Prophet (AS) was reflected in the Bible:

"And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them."

Bible, Exodus, 26-28 (King James Version)

Allah (SWT) preserved the body of Pharaoh in the sea as a sign for people to reflect on, as stated in the Quran:

"This day shall We save you in your body, that you may be a Sign to those who come after you! But verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our Signs!"

Yunus, Jonah, 10:92

Dr Bucaille was concerned about the main cause of Merneptah's death in contrast to his partners who were more focused on reconditioning the corpse's state.

As Dr Bucaille was deliberating on the possibilities of Merneptah being embalmed after he drowned in the Red Sea, one of his partners murmured in his ear about

how Muslims already believed that he did indeed drown.

Dr Bucaille was in confusion about how the awareness of Muslims on the Pharaoh's cause of death came before other researchers and himself.

After the corpse was sent back to Cairo in Egypt for display in a museum, Dr Bucaille decided to embark on a trip to Saudi Arabia to attend a medical conference, alongside Muslim anatomists, in the hopes of clearing his doubts.

During the conference, Dr Bucaille shared about how Pharaoh's body was kept together despite drowning. Another man who attended the conference then opened the Quran and recited the verse:



"This day shall We save you in your body, that you may be a Sign to those who come after you! But verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our Signs!"

#### Yunus, Jonah, 10:92

Dr Bucaille immediately stood up and testified that he believes in the Quran and has converted to Islam. When he came back to France, he carried out in-depth studies on the compatibility of scientific facts with Quranic verses for a decade. Later, Dr Bucaille wrote the book The Bible, The Quran and Science.

#### Books written by Dr Maurice Bucaille In 1976, Dr Bucaille's book entitled 'The Bible, The Quran and Science' was published. Over 15 million copies



of the well-known book have been distributed worldwide in French and 12 other languages, including English, Arabic, Indonesian, and German. Dr Bucaille received prestigious awards for authoring the book, including the Golden Book Award in 1986 and France's Best Seller Book Award in 1998.

In his book, Dr Bucaille said that the link between Quran and Science is astonishing, such that there are no contradictions between them:

"The relationship between the Quran and Science is a priori a surprise, especially when it turns out to be one of harmony and not of discord."

He also mentioned that the Quran already contained scientific theories that took multiple centuries for scientists to discover:

"I had not thought it possible for one to find so many statements in a text, compiled more than thirteen centuries ago, referring to extremely diverse subjects and all of them totally keeping with modern scientific knowledge."

Dr Bucaille, who died on 17 February 1998, had written several other books, one of which was about his study on the Pharaoh's body entitled 'Mummies of the Pharaohs: Modern Medical Investigation' (1990). Other books include 'Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Quran and History', 'What Is the Origin of Man?' and 'The Quran and Modern Science', to

References Quranandscience.com The Bible, The Quran and Science by Dr Maurice Bucgille

# equal in the God

By Dr Waffie Mohammed

WE LOOK INTO HOW ISLAM VIEWS EQUALITY. HOW HUMAN BEINGS VARY IN CAPACITY. AND THE SAME POTENTIAL WE HAVE TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE BEST OF OUR SPIRITUAL MEASUREMENT.

image: iStock.com/khananastasia

# EACH SOUL IS MADE FROM THE SAME REFINED LIGHT SO IN ESSENCE EACH SOUL HAS THE SAME CAPACITY

Allah (SWT) has given every physical thing a capacity. The capacities in human beings vary. It is not the same as some are physically stronger or, intellectually advanced.

Allah (SWT) says that he made us in tribes and nations so that you can be identified:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and Tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other).

Al-Hujurat, The Inner Apartments, 49:13

This being said, we know that in Allah's sight we are all equal. How then are we equal if we vary in capacity? The answer is the soul. While physically we vary, each soul has the same potential to get closer to Allah (SWT). Each soul is made from the same refined light so in essence each soul has the same capacity, regardless of time and place.

The difference comes in the extent each individual takes in keeping the soul bright and shinning.

Allah (SWT) says:

Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

Al-Hujurat, The Inner Apartments, 49:13

The most righteous can possibly be those who made the effort to polish their souls, working hard to keep any blemishes away from it. And this exercise extends to all of mankind regardless of physical differences.

In so doing, those who can achieve this will be equal in the sight of Allah (SWT).

Our mission is to keep the soul bright and shining. This will increase one's capacity to get closer to Allah (SWT).

If you should put a flammable object next to fire, it will obviously burn. So to the dirt one puts on the heart is flammable.

#### Allah (SWT) says:

The Fire of Allah, kindled, which leaps up over the hearts.

Al-Humazah, The Scandalmonger, 104:6-7

It is the impurities one puts around the heart that will burn in the fire.

However, through efforts of polishing the soul, all those impurities can be erased.

The brighter the soul, the greater is the possibility of getting closer to Allah (SWT), regardless of physical deformities.

The best ingredients for achieving this are sincerity and humility. They both are of great benefit and value with regards to our ascent to our Lord.

Satan was not sincere and humble in his worship and it eventually came to light and resulted in his downfall. Allah (SWT) has preserved these lessons for us to take note.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) established trustworthiness and truthfulness, and he was physically taken up in the Mi'raj (Night Ascension).

Keep this in mind and work hard to get closer to Allah (SWT). Use the physical capacity that Allah (SWT) has given you to assist you in achieving this goal, and do not utilise it for things that will bring about unfortunate results.

THE BEST
INGREDIENTS
FOR ACHIEVING
THIS ARE
SINCERITY AND
HUMILITY

# Supplication after Adhan

Salah (Prayer) is a gift of Allah (SWT) to Muslims through Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Muslims invoke Allah's Blessings on Rasulullah (SAW) as the 'Adhan ends by saying the following supplication.

ٱللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةِ التَّامَّةِ. .Allahumma rabba hādzihi da'watit tāmmah

> وَالصَّلاَةِ الْقَامَّةِ آتِ سَيِّدِنَا Wash-shalatil qamah. Ati Sayyidina

مُحَمَّدُ نِ الْوَسِيْلَةَ وَالفَضِيْلَةَ. Muhammadanil wasilah wal-fadhiilah.

وَالشَّرَفَ وَالدَّرَجَةَ الْعَالِيَّةَ الرَّفِيْعَةَ. Wasy-syarafa waddarajatal 'āliyyatar rafii'ah.

وَابْعَثْهُ الْمَقَامَ الْمَحْمُوْدَ الذِّيْ وَعَدْتَهُ.

Wabathhul magāmal mahmuudal ladzi wa'adhtah.

O 'Allāh, the Lord of this perfect call, and the present prayer. Bestow upon our Leader Muhammad, the means of access. Excellence, the Dignity, and the highly exalted position. Raise him to the praiseworthy position that You have promised him, for You are One who does not back out from promises.

إِنَّكَ لاَ تُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعِادَ. Innaka lā tukhliful mii'ād.

image: iStock.com/MarioGuti
teens' crossroads
volume 24 number 2 | 2016

www.mras.col/teenscrossroads

# A crowdsourced animal sanctuary in east Aleppo teaches compassion:

# 'To love the small, weak cats is to love everything'

(This article is reprinted with the kind permission of Syria Direct, a non-profit journalism organisation that produces in-depth reporting of Syria. Photographs courtesy of Mohamad Alaa Aljaleel [FB].)



#### Written by:

Mohammad Abdulssattar Ibrahim. He is from Amouda in Hasakah province. He moved to Jordan in 2004. Mohammad started work with the Syrian Revolution LCC in Amman by doing reporting and coordinating protests. After that he did volunteer work for refugees in Amman.

Mahran Mohammed. He holds a degree in Arabic literature from Damascus University. Originally from Daraa province, he was involved in the earliest peaceful demonstrations of the Syrian revolt. In 2013, Mahran was injured in a regime attack and moved to Jordan. Mahran previously volunteered with Save the Children.

Maria Nelson. She was a 2014-2015 fellow at the Center for Arabic Study Abroad program (CASA I) in Amman, Jordan. She holds a BA in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University, with a certificate in Arabic Language and Culture.

Kristen Gillespie Demilio. She has more than 10 years of experience reporting from the Middle East while based in Amman. She regularly contributed to news outlets including CBS News Radio, NPR, The Jerusalem Report and PBS and is a graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism as well as the Institut Francais des Etudes Arabes in Damascus.



AMMAN: "Every cat has a story." says Mohammad Alaa Aljaleel, a full-time ambulance driver and part-time cat caretaker living in rebel-held east Aleppo, Syria.

There is Sukhoi, named for a Russian fighter plane, "because he is so fast." There is Zorro the Noble, who defended one of the cats "when the others attacked her."

"And then, there is al-Baghdadi, who kills the other cats and takes their food," earning him the name of the Islamic State leader.

Aljaleel recounted these and other tales of the more than 170 cats, two dogs and other animals that he feeds and houses in a cat shelter - the first of its kind in Syria - in the Masaken Hanano neighbourhood of east Aleppo, one of the epicentres of the Syrian war.

How does Aljaleel run an animal shelter in a warzone? The answer is that he is not alone. An online network of supporters around the world is donating thousands of dollars to help not only the stray animals of east Aleppo, but also the humans experiencing the shortages and trauma of blockade and bombardment.



Last year, a violinist and humanitarian activist of Lebanese origin living approximately 2,500km away from Aljaleel in Cremona, Italy, saw a report about his work with Aleppo's cats on Facebook. "I read about how he was caring for the cats," Alessandra Abidin told Syria Direct. "I decided to look for him and contact him."

She reached out to Aljaleel - in Arabic - and together they set up a group on Facebook: Il gattaro d'Aleppo, or "the cat man of Aleppo."

The group, with nearly 4,500 members, connects Aljaleel with his supporters around the world - in Italy, New Zealand, Morocco, Poland, South Korea, France, the United States and other nations - and coordinates donations for his work with the animals and people of Aleppo.

In late 2015, with the prospect of stable financial support, Aljaleel opened the

Ernesto Cat Shelter in Aleppo, named for Abidin's cat that died of cancer. Donations by supporters keep it running and allow him to buy food for the cats.

Every day, Aljaleel posts pictures of the cats in the shelter, and sometimes updates about his work as a first responder. Group members comment with messages of encouragement and support for him and the cats.

"After all the rescue work today, all the tragedy and pain - still the cats eat," wrote one supporter on a recent photo update by Aljaleel. "We love you for showing us what love looks like."

Group members support Alaa's work by sending Abidin donations via PayPal or Postepay. The funds raised ultimately reach Alaa through Syria Charity, a French aid organisation in charge of the hospital where he works. The money supports the shelter's cats as well as Alaa's other humanitarian work in Aleppo.

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For example, group members recently donated to help Aljaleel repair his ambulance after it was damaged by an airstrike in Aleppo city last week [late August 2016]. In recent days, individual donations by members total €800 (S\$1227). The average donation was around €40 (S\$61).

"What many people do not know is that, through the cat shelter, we have collected a lot of donations to help people in Aleppo at all levels," Abidin told Syria Direct. During the one-month blockade of east Aleppo by regime forces this past July, crowd-sourced donations by "my friends," Aljaleel said, "gave me money to buy food for the people and the cats."

The cats survived on rice and mortadella - "they did not like it, but they were hungry," said Aljaleel - and Aleppo residents received food. Aljaleel distributed cookies to local children. When rebel forces broke through the blockade in early August.

deliveries of food entered eastern Aleppo for the people, and the cats went back to fresh meat and bones.

Aljaleel says that, since 2015, individual donations have paid for "three wells serving 2,000 people in Aleppo, bought two ambulances, and helped many people with aid."

Donations have also paid for a playground next to the cat shelter, to which local children's organisations and orphanages regularly organise trips as a distraction from the incessant bombings.

"I heard about the cat shelter through somebody who told me it had a playground next to it that we could take the children to," said Muhammad, who works at the Aleppo-based Children's Education House, which organises activities and games for local children. "Children have been mentally exhausted lately." Muhammad told Syria Direct. "The



sound and severity of the explosions in the city put a psychological strain on them. We are trying to take them out to places to help with that."

Most Fridays, Muhammad now takes the children who frequent the Education House out to visit the cats and other animals at the shelter.

"Young children love animals in general," Muhammad told Syria Direct, remembering his first visit to the shelter. "They were really happy there, in the cat shelter, while they were playing with the cats."

Cats that were raised as household pets or are naturally friendly, sport red collars, so the children know which ones they can interact with safely.

"The children loved the cats," said Muhammad. "They were carrying them







and playing with them in the playground."
"They were really happy. I was, too."
The Ernesto Cat Shelter consists of a shady, enclosed courtyard adjoining a house with space for the cats to sleep inside during the winter, and rooms for the basic medical treatment of injured animals.

"The Civil Defense gives me cats who are injured," said Aljaleel.
"I'm no veterinarian, but I make casts and stitch up their wounds."
One of the dogs currently living at the shelter came to Aljaleel with a broken leg, and stayed after it healed.

"There is a firm bond between humanitarianism and caring for animals," Aljaleel said, "between rescuing an injured person who might die and an animal who has been injured and needs help."



Two shelter staff members - friends of Aljaleel's - receive a salary to watch over the shelter and feed the cats while he is responding to bombings or transporting wounded civilians.

'Compassion is for everything'
When the war reached Aleppo city in 2012
and it descended into an ever-worsening
quagmire of violence, Aljaleel chose to
stay behind to rescue and care for the
residents of his city - human and animal
alike.

"I've cared for cats ever since I was young," Aljaleel, a married father of three and a trained electrician, told Syria Direct. "My family loved cats and I had a few of them... I would bathe them and let them sleep next to me."

"After the residents fled this area because of the bombing, there was no trash for the cats to eat," Aljaleel told Syria Direct. "The cats gathered around me, and I would feed them."

"Compassion is for everything, not just for people," said Aljaleel. "It is also for the animals that are wounded, or have nothing to eat."

After a day in the ambulance, Aljaleel would gather scraps of food and set out to feed the cats in the neighbouring streets. Images of him doing so were widely shared online beginning two years ago, earning him the name 'the cat man of Aleppo'. His story ultimately reached Alessandra Abidin, and the cat shelter was established.

**'To love everything'**Because the cat shelter is a boon for the

local community - bringing in muchneeded monetary contributions that fund a variety of projects - it has also influenced the way some residents view their local cats, Aljaleel told Syria Direct.

"People saw that the cats are the reason for the money that feeds the needy, so they feel compassion for them," he explained. "They keep a look out for hungry cats in the street for me."

Before fleeing the city, some residents entrusted their cats - and one dog - to Aljaleel's care. He tries to make sure that former pets stay inside the shelter as much as he can, "to protect them from the bombing and the cold of the coming winter."

But some of the cats are unable to forget their departed human companions and are hopeful that - someday - they will come back for them. Those cats only visit the shelter at meal times, said Aljaleel, then "go back to the houses they were raised in, and they wait for their owners."

Still, like clockwork, twice a day every day at mealtimes, the roving cats of Aleppo

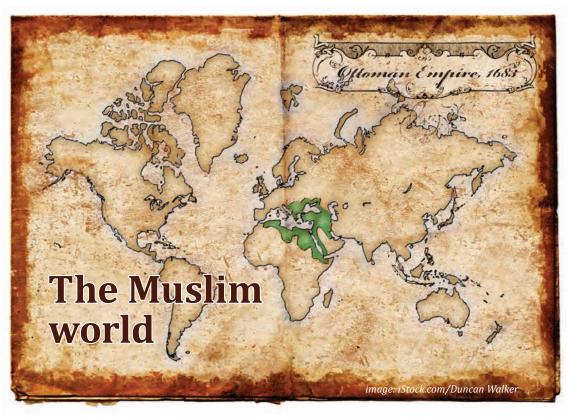




come running to the shelter, an olive-shaded oasis. As a result of Aljaleel's humanitarian work, the commune of Segrate in Milan, Italy, launched his candidacy for a Nobel Peace Prize this past August, citing his "love and care for every living thing." "My role as a rescuer is not to differentiate between those who need help." Aljaleel told Syria Direct in August 2016. "To love the small, weak cats is to love everything."

To donate to the Ernesto Cat Shelter, please go to its Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/ groups/1509943749305018/) for instructions.

TC: The latest update, before going to print, on 17 November 2016, was that the home of Aljaleel and the Ernesto Cat Shelter were bombed and badly damaged. Alhamdulillah, Aljaleel and his family survived the attack. The shelter's mascot, a dog named Hope, and at least two other cats, however, were killed due to the airstrike. The work for Aljaleel continues, no matter how difficult it gets. #PrayforSyria



#### By Dr Adam Brown

THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT AN EXPRESSION THAT IS COMMONLY USED, IN THE MEDIA AND ELSEWHERE. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT OBVIOUS THAT PEOPLE HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF EXACTLY WHAT THEY MEAN BY THIS EXPRESSION. THE EXPRESSION IS THE MUSLIM WORLD, AND THIS ARTICLE GIVES SOME THOUGHT TO THE EXPRESSION, AND TRIES TO GIVE ACCURATE FIGURES TO PIN DOWN WHERE OR WHAT THE MUSLIM WORLD IS.

In 2009, the number of Muslims in countries of the world was estimated by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. This institution, established in 1979, describes itself, on its website (pewforum. org), as "a nonpartisan 'fact tank' that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. ... It does not take positions on policy issues." It is named after its four co-founders J. Howard Pew, Mary Ethel Pew, Joseph N. Pew Jr, and Mabel Pew Myrin.

Their 2009 report gives the number of Muslims worldwide as 1.57 billion (pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx).



We may wonder about the accuracy of these figures. Firstly, the Pew Forum may simply be inaccurate. However, they claim that their report is "based on the best available data for 232 countries and territories. Pew Forum researchers, in consultation with nearly 50 demographers and social scientists at universities and research centres around the world, acquired and analysed about 1,500 sources, including census reports, demographic studies and general population surveys, to arrive at these figures – the largest project of its kind to date."

Secondly. most commentators state that Islam is the world's fastest growing religion. So, the figures, even if accurate, are likely to go out-of-date quickly. The Pew Forum predict that, if current increases continue, the world Muslim population will rise "to nearly 2.8 billion in 2050" (www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims).

In the 2013 New Zealand census, there were 46,149 Muslims, a rise of 27.9% over the 2006 figure; nevertheless, this still only represents 1% of the total New Zealand population.

Thirdly, there are always large question marks over how such figures are arrived at. For example, in the New Zealand census, you are asked about various aspects of your life, including religion. But nobody ever checks the truth of your responses. A Muslim is defined as someone who says the shahadah (testimony of faith). But there are good Muslims and bad Muslims. There are Muslims who say their five daily prayers, go to the mosque every Friday, fast during Ramadhan, pay Zakat, avoid haram things such as alcohol and riba (usury); and there are others that don't. And so on.

So, where is this entity 'The Muslim world'? For many, the expression seems to be used synonymously with 'The Middle East' or 'The Arab world'.

However, this is not the case. According to a Pew Forum study (www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscapemuslim), the countries of the world with the largest Muslim populations are as follows (all figures are estimated in 2010, and have been rounded to the nearest

million):



\* Evangelische Missions-Stationen.

\* Romisch-Ratholische Missions-Stationen.

\* Romisch-Ratholische Missions-Stationen.

Be-Bridorgemeinde illernituter/ L. \* Leipziger Mission
Bn-Berliner Mission M. \* Leipziger Mission
Bn-Berliner Mission Md-Norddeutsche od. Bre
Bn-Bische Missionen
G. Gossnersche M. Berlin II) A. \* Amerikantsche M.

D. \* Deutsch- Oktaffikantsche Mission Berlin III]



- 1. Indonesia 209 m
- 2. India 176 m
- 3. Pakistan 167 m
- 4. Bangladesh 134 m
- 5. Nigeria 77 m
- 6. Egypt 77 m
- 7. Iran 74 m
- 8. Turkey 71 m
- 9. Algeria 35 m
- 10. Morocco 32 m

# Three points stand out:

- Within the top ten, only three are Arab countries: Egypt (#5), Algeria and Morocco (#9 and #10, each with less than half the population of #8)
- Only 2½ of the top ten countries are in the Middle East (Egypt and Iran, and part of Turkey)
- The top four (Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), with a combined total of 686 m, constitute about 43% of all Muslims worldwide

After Morocco at #10 with 32 m, come a number of Arab and Middle Eastern countries: Iraq: 30 m, Sudan: 30 m, Afghanistan: 28 m, Ethiopia: 28 m, Saudi Arabia: 25 m, Syria 20 m.

As well as countries in other parts of the world:

- Uzbekistan 27 m
- China 22 m

So, the expression 'The Muslim world' certainly does not equate nowadays with 'The Arab world' or 'The Middle East'.

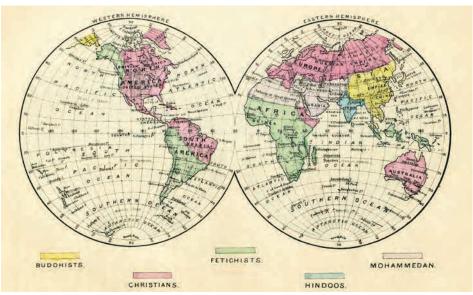
This is not to belittle the Arab world or the Middle East in any way except numerically. The Arabic language is very important in Islam. The Holy Quran was revealed in Arabic because it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who spoke Arabic. The Middle East is also important. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) lived in Makkah and Madinah, in present-day Saudi Arabia. Hajj involves travel to these places. The third holiest place in Islam, the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, is also in the Middle East. However, nowadays, Islam has spread far beyond the boundaries of the Arabic Middle East.



und Karton Afrika.
AL. Amerik Luther
CB. Canad. Bapt.
CP. Canad. Presbyt
DM-Dän. Missian
FM. Freimissian
IP. Frische Presbyterianer
MF - Waltad Enica



image: iStock.com/Roberto A Sanchez



Map of the religious world, 1884. (image: iStock.com/traveler1116)

Let us return to the expression 'The Muslim world'. Here are a couple of quotations from the internet using the expression.

### Financial Express

(www.thefinancialexpress-bd. com)

US keen to work with Bangladesh in making bridge with Muslim world

Bangladesh and the United States of America (USA) have significant opportunities to work together to make a bridge between the Muslim world and the USA, said US Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Judith McHale, as the Obama government is taking major steps to that end.

So, the Muslim world and the USA must be different places. The USA is not part of the Muslim world. And another quote:

Gay Travels in the Muslim World (www.gaytravelsinislam.com/)

Gay? Bisexual? Homosexual? ...

The Middle East and the Muslim World is different from Europe, Canada and the United States.

So, Europe, Canada and the United States are not part of the Muslim world? Not according to the Pew Forum report. There are several countries of Europe where Muslims make up at least 5% of the population, including surprising examples such as Cyprus, Montenegro, Bulgaria, France, The Netherlands and Denmark. Russia alone has 16 million Muslims and 8,000 mosques (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\_in\_Russia#Demographics). The capital, Moscow, has 1 million Muslim



THESE FIGURES SHOW THAT THERE ARE MUSLIMS IN EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. WIKIPEDIA SHOWS THAT THE ONLY COUNTRY WITH NO MUSLIMS IS THE VATICAN CITY: THIS IS IN FACT INCORRECT. AS POPE FRANCIS TOOK IN SOME SYRIAN REFUGEES EARLIER THIS YEAR.

image: iStock.com/ideabug

residents and up to 1.5 million more Muslim migrant workers. Germany has a large Muslim population (4 m), and estimates of France's Muslim population range up to 7.7 m. The United Kingdom has 2.7 m.

The United States can be considered part of the Muslim world, as it has 3.3 m Muslims. Canada, with a Muslim population of 1 m, is 3.2% Muslim.

So, Europe, the USA and Canada have sizeable Muslim minorities.

And let us not forget Israel, which has a Muslim population of 1.7 m, 21% of the total population.

Closer to home, while some countries in Southeast Asia are Muslim-majority countries, others have sizeable Muslim minorities, such as the Philippines (5 m) and Thailand (7 m). Australia has 476,000 Muslims, 2.2% of the total population.

### Conclusion

These figures show that there are Muslims in every country in the world. Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\_by\_country) shows that the only country with no Muslims is the Vatican City; this is in fact incorrect, as Pope Francis took in some Syrian refugees earlier this year.

Rather, these figures cast doubt over the meaning of the expression 'The Muslim world'. It is not synonymous with 'The Arab world' or 'The Middle East'. If you hear someone use the expression 'The Muslim world', you should ask them to explain what they mean by it.

This article has been reprinted with the kind permission of Mount Albert Islamic Trust. Find out about the Islamic community in New Zealand by downloading Mount Albert Islamic Trust's monthly newsletter called "Rocket Science" (http://www. mtalbertislamiccentre.org/node/11).

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# An-Nisa (Women)

CHAPTER 4, 176 VERSES MEDINA PERIOD

Whether you do some good openly or do it in secret, or pardon an evil (done to you, even though you have the right to legal retaliation, know that) God is All-Pardoning, Ever-Able (to punish or forgive).

Verse 149 Translation of the Quran

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image: iStock.com/da-kuk

# France's Burkini **Debate** Reverberates Around the World

## By Dan Bilefsky

I ONDON — The burkini has become perhaps the most potent symbol in France's long-running battle over its vaunted secular identity. This summer's heated debate over bans on the full-body swimwear by beach towns on the French Riviera has reverberated around the world, with widely different reactions.

In Britain and the United States, the modest outfits are being seen as part of a multicultural model of integrating minorities. In China, where face-covering swimwear has long been popular among wrinkle-fearing beachgoers, many do not understand what the fuss is about.

The swimsuit's Lebanese-Australian inventor. Aheda Zanetti, said in an interview last week that the French and others have "misunderstood the burkini swimsuit," which she said she created after her young niece found it cumbersome to play sports in a regular Islamic headscarf.



"The burkini swimsuit is freedom and happiness and lifestyle changes — you can't take that away from a Muslim, or any other woman, that chooses to wear it," Zanetti said.

"I wanted to introduce a full range of clothing to suit a Muslim woman — or any woman — that wanted a bit of modesty and wanted to participate in any sporting activities," she added. "It was also my aim for them not to be judged for who they are, or where they're from, and who people think they're representing."

Here is a look at how the battle over the burkini has played out in various places.



### **Britain**

Last week, the populist tabloid The Sun published an article showing Muslim women dressed in body-covering garments playing joyously on the beach in the seaside city of Brighton. "British Muslims enjoy day at the beach in Islamic dress ... while Frenchwomen face arrest for doing the same," the headline proclaimed.

The swimsuit has become so popular that it recently sold out at the retailer Marks & Spencer. Sales may also have been given a lift thanks to popular television chef Nigella Lawson, who wore a burkini while on vacation in Australia five years ago.

Ismail Sacranie, a founder of Modestly Active, the Islamic sportswear manufacturer that designed Lawson's burkini, said 35 percent of his clients were non-Muslim. "It is primarily driven by the desire to protect against the sun," he said in a phone interview, "but the other reason is that some women of all sizes just don't want to wear something tiny, and feel more comfortable being covered."

After former French President Nicolas Sarkozy called the outfit "provocation for the service of a project of radicalised political Islam," best-selling author JK Rowling retorted: "So Sarkozy calls the burkini a 'provocation.' Whether women cover or uncover their bodies, seems we're always, always 'asking for it."

Not everyone in Britain is wild about the burkini, of course.

Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a Muslim, wrote in The Daily Mail that burkini sellers were "complicit in a version of Islam that believes women must be subjugated in public."

image: iStock.com/nullplus

### **North Africa**

This summer a Facebook page was created with the apparent aim of shaming women wearing bikinis on the beaches of Morocco, a majority-Muslim kingdom and former French protectorate. "Our slogan is: No to vice in an Islamic Moroccan nation," the country's media quoted the creator of the page, identified as Aicha Amal, as saying. The page has been taken down.

On his own Facebook page, Omar al-Kazabri, the imam of the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, condemned the "obscene nudity" of women on the beaches.

Long before the French ban, many private hotels and pools in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia — all governed by France in the past — had put up signs banning the burkini, or variations of it, some citing hygiene. But the bans did not come from the government.

"Unlike France, the ban on burkini in Morocco comes from a few private institutions." the Moroccan tourism minister, Lahcen Haddad, recently told the magazine Jeune Afrique. "We are in a Muslim country that also respects individual freedoms and private initiative." Burkinis caused a stir years ago in Algeria when they started appearing on beaches. "Just walk along the Algerian coast to find that most Algerian women shun the swimsuit," the website Algeria Focus reported in 2014. "The general trend is modesty, so we see more and more women dressed in a burkini."

#### West Africa

On the beaches of Dakar, the mostly Muslim capital of the overwhelmingly Muslim country of Senegal, no one seems to notice or care what anyone wears. One recent hot afternoon, male bathers wore jeans, white briefs or board shorts

into the water. Women were soaking in long dresses, burkinis, bikinis and one-piece swimsuits.

Nordpresse, a Belgian website of political satire, created a stir this week with an article that falsely linked the origin of burkinis to Burkina Faso.

The article claimed that a member of the French parliament had said that women wearing burkinis "should be sent back to their country, Burkina Faso."

The story, even though it was satire, prompted outrage. In the region, jokes by Western politicians or news publications are sensitive, especially when the butt of the joke is a former French colony.

### Germany

In anything-goes Berlin, which is as comfortable with intellectuals, nudists and clubbers with body piercings as it is with newly arrived Syrian refugees, the burkini is just another outfit.

There are no national regulations governing religious dress, and the German government has indicated that it will not support bans on burkinis.

In the bustling working-class and multicultural Wedding district of Berlin, Julia Friese, a journalist, showed up at one pool in a burkini and said she felt "invisible."

Writing in Die Welt, she said that no one looked askance at her, curious children chatted with her respectfully and some men pretended not to see her. She said the pool's management — told that she was writing a column on the burkini — had encouraged her to inform readers on how to buy one.

As in any country, there are naysayers. In June, the mayor of Neutraubling, a small

town in Bavaria, banned the wearing of burkinis in public pools.

In the state of Brandenburg, the parliamentary group of Alternative for Germany, the populist nationalist party, has demanded that burkinis be banned.

But such views seem to be in the minority. After the parents of a Muslim girl in Frankfurt asked that she be exempted from swimming classes that included boys, the Federal Administrative Court in September 2013 ruled that she could wear a burkini as a compromise.

### Italy

In Italy, which has a sizable population of Muslim immigrants, the French burkini bans have elicited strong reactions.

Izzeddin Elzir, the imam of a mosque in Florence and the president of the Union of Islamic Communities in Italy, posted on his Facebook page a photo of nuns frolicking in the waves at a beach.

Some interpreted Elzir's post as suggesting that nuns should be banned from wearing their habits at the beach. But Elzir countered that he had merely posted a photograph that spoke for itself.

"I just wanted to get people to stop and think," he said. "That's why I posted the photo alone, without writing a single word. I didn't want to take sides but rather to spur a healthy debate."

### Russia

In Russia, the burkini has been banned or rebuked in some quarters as an affront to hygiene and local culture.

The Rus health resort in Yessentuki, a city at the base of the Caucasus Mountains, banned women this month from wearing full-body swimsuits, saying that guests



People wade in the water at Yoff Beach in Dakar, Senegal, 7 August 2016. In countries outside of France, the burkini, the body-covering swimwear, has been embraced as a symbol of modesty, liberation and even diversity. (Jane Hahn/The New York Times)



had complained; the resort's head doctor called the swimsuit unhygienic.

A correspondent for the newspaper Moskovsky Komsomolets showed up on a Moscow beach wearing a burkini to see how locals would react, and found that while most people were not bothered, some objected rudely.

"If you're bundling yourself up in a burkini, it's better to stay home, to sit in warmth, in a comfy chair, to enjoy life," one observer told the interviewer. "Here, you should undress and sunbathe."
Still, others called for a live-and-let-live attitude. "Let her swim," another Moscovite told the newspaper. "She's not scaring anyone."

Prominent opposition figure Aleksei A.
Navalny endorsed a column by the editorin-chief of Deutsche Welle, the German
broadcaster, that framed the decision to
ban the burkini as an example of "a liberal
constitutional state decisively acting
against the enemies of liberalism."

Muslims have not raced to the swimwear's defense. Al'bir Rifkatovich Kurganov, a

mufti, or Islamic legal scholar, in Moscow, has said that a French-style ban would be irrelevant for Russians, since practising Muslims would not be visiting secular beaches in the first place.

### The United States

American Muslims have greeted France's burkini ban with bemusement and dismay.

In northern New Jersey, which has a vibrant Muslim population, the newspaper The Record reported that the burkini ban had "mystified" many locals. The newspaper talked to two Muslim sisters, Sara and Sondos Elnakib, who said they wore yoga pants and long-sleeve shirts to show modesty at the beach.

The sisters have sold burkinis at a pop-up store — one is called The Hepburn — to appeal to fashion-conscious women. Women interviewed by the newspaper rejected the notion that burkinis encouraged radicalism, and compared it to the conservative attire of Orthodox Jews or Catholic clergy.

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# Al-Fath (Victory)

CHAPTER 48. 29 VERSES MEDINA PERIOD

He it is Who sent down His (gift of) inner peace and reassurance into the hearts of the believers, so that they might add faith to their faith. To God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth; and God is All-Knowing. All-Wise.

And that He may admit the believing men and believing women into Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide; and may blot out from their evil deeds - that is a supreme triumph in God's sight.

Verses 4 to 5
Translation of the Quran

# 12 tips for Muslim teens helping Muslim teens

By Samana Siddiqui

Why should you, a young Muslim, be helping to bring your friends closer to Allah?

After all, you've got your own struggles to deal with: trying to explain why you pray to hostile teachers. Hijab discrimination, standing up in class when the professor attacks Islam, dealing with parents who think you've gone nuts because you're growing a beard, or all the other difficulties faced by a number of practising Muslim youth?

Islam was never meant to be an individualistic faith, reserved for the 'chosen few'. Muslims have a duty to spread the Deen (way of life), and practising Muslim youth, whether beginners, activists or leaders have a crucial role to play.

"Allah has put them in a position that perhaps no one else is in," notes Sheema Khan, former Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA) advisor for eastern



image: iStock.com/piskunov

Canada. "They have the means to communicate with their peers, they have an understanding of what they're going through plus they have the guidance of Islam."

Who is your childhood friend, who would rather spend Fridays at MacDonald's than the Masjid, or your classmate who is Muslim in name and only knows that "Muslims don't eat pork" going to listen to: the nice Imam of the Masjid who would freak out if he saw the way they were dressed and talked, or you who may have grown up with them, joked with them, or see them every day in school?

The answer is obvious: you.

Don't panic. Here are some tips and advice which can help from other Muslims, many of whom have been there and done that:

1. Make your intention sincere

All work we do should ideally be for the sake of Allah. That includes the task of bringing someone closer to Allah. That of course means this should not be connected to arrogance, thinking you're the teacher and everyone else should be lucky you've embarked on a crusade to save them. Guidance is from Allah. Make Dua (supplication) and make sincere efforts and remember Allah can also misguide you if He wills (we seek refuge in Allah from that).

### 2. Practise what you preach

Not practising what you preach is wrong and you will lose the confidence of anyone, young or old, once they figure you out. Don't do it.

3. Use the Quran and Seerah (biography of the Prophet) as Dawah guides

Read and understand those chapters of the Quran which talk about how the Prophets presented the message of Islam to their people. Read the Seerah (from some good Seerah books) to see especially how Prophet Muhammad (SAW) brought Islam to so many different people, including young people.

Also, talk to Dawah workers, and check out manuals they may have written, like Yahiya Emerick's How to Tell Others About Islam.

# 4. Talk to people as if you really don't know them

Don't assume you know someone just by looking at them. You don't know that the Muslim girl in your homeroom who walks through the school's hallways as if they were fashion show catwalks (see Amber

Rehman's perspective on this: http://www.soundvision.com/article/proud-to-be-a-stranger) is not someone you can talk to about Allah because she looks like a snob. Or that the Muslim guy who you've never seen at Juma (Friday prayer) at your university is a "bad Muslim". Maybe he was never really taught Islam and has no idea what importance Friday prayers have in Islam, especially for Muslim men.

### 5. Smile

Did you know the Prophet (SAW) was big on smiling? But many "practising" Muslims seem to have "their faces on upside down" as one speaker once said-frowning and serious.

Smiling, being polite and kind are all part of the manners of the Prophet (SAW), which we must exercise in our daily lives. If we want to approach others with Islam, we have to make ourselves approachable. Smiling is key to this.

But note that being approachable does not mean being flirtatious with the other gender. There are Islamic rules for how men and women should deal with each other which have to be respected. Dawah is no excuse to have long and private conversations and meetings with the other sex, for example. Set up a system where someone expressing an interest in Islam is referred to someone of the same sex.

# 6. Take the initiative and hang out with them

Take the first step and invite someone you may have spoken to a couple of times to sit at lunch together, to check out a hockey game or invite them over for Iftar (break of fast) in Ramadhan. Also, share difficulties, sorrows and frustrations. Help with homework, be a shoulder to cry on when



depression hits, or just plain listen when your friend is upset, discuss common problems and KEEP THEIR SECRETS. There are few things as annoying as a snitch and backstabber. But an important note: if the problem is of a serious nature, (i.e. your friend is thinking of committing suicide or is taking drugs), notify and consult an adult immediately.

# 7. Show them Islam is relevant today, right here, right now

Young people may think Islam is too "old fashioned" and not in tune with the modern age. Prove this wrong. Show how Islam is really about relating to Allah, which any human being can do, anywhere, anytime. Allah is always closer to you than your jugular vein and He hears and knows everything. Encourage friends to ask Allah's help during tests, exams, and in dealing with problems at home with parents and siblings. Also point out how Islam relates to teenagers: Islam gives you focus and an understanding of who you are and

where you are going, which most of "teen culture" does not.

# 8. Get them involved in volunteer work with you

If you are already involved in the community, get your friend to help out. Ask them to make a flyer for one of your youth group's events or brainstorm for ideas about activities to hold this school year. This involvement makes them feel part of the Muslim community and deepens your friendship, since you are now working together on something beneficial for both of you. Make sure you thank them for their contribution.

# 9. Ask them 4 fundamental questions

As your friendship develops, you will notice the topics you discuss may become more serious. You may be discussing, for instance, future goals and plans.

Khan recommends four questions to ask that can steer the topic to Allah and Islam:



- a. Where am I going in life and what would make me really happy deep down inside?
- b. What do I believe?
- c. Who should I be grateful to?
- d. Did I get to where I am today without the help of anyone?

# 10. Emphasise praying five times a day before any other aspect of Islam

A person's main connection with Allah, on a daily basis, is through the prayer five times a day. Don't emphasise any other aspect of Islam until your friend starts making a real effort to pray five times a day. Emphasise the direct connection one has with Allah in prayer. If they are facing a problem, tell them to pray, and to ask Allah for help in Solah (Prayer) and outside this time. When possible, make it a point to pray together during your "hang out time". If your friend begins to pray, that is the first step to other aspects of Islam like giving up swearing, treating parents with respect or dressing Islamically.

11. Help instil confidence in adults
Adults, like Bart Simpson's dad Homer, are
considered bumbling idiots in the eyes of
'teen culture'. Your job as a young Muslim

is to help turn the tables on this false and unIslamic belief. All you have to do is this: when a Muslim adult does something good (i.e. saving someone's life, donating money to a worthy cause, the Imam gives a good speech, taking good care of his/her family) bring it up in the course of your conversations with your friend and praise the adult in question. Doing this regularly may not only change your friend's perspective, but could lead to them seeing their own parents in a more respectful way.

# 12. Support them even when they become more practising

Remember, just because a person starts practising Islam more regularly, this does not mean everything will be okay from this point onwards. There will still be hard times, difficulties. There may be times when your friend may have doubts about his or her newfound practice of Islam. Be there to reassure them. **tc** 

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# ONE-MINUTE DAWAH

Spread the message of peace through our actions

# BE TACTFUL. THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU SPEAK.



Show the kindness and beauty of Islam beyond media stereotypes

