



# W A H D A T

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## Practicing Positively

By Madiha Zaidi

As we watch the world's fear of our beautiful religion grow greater, our hearts begin to sink. How can people hate our religion, which has a name that stems from the root word of "peace"? The mainstream media continues to send mixed messages, mostly negative ones, and all we can do is watch as our faith is humiliated, misunderstood, and down-right degraded. In an ideal world, human beings would not judge a religion from the actions of a few. But since we are not living an ideal world, it is our job to create one.

As we look around in our community centers across the world, we see great things going on. There are fundraisers for the needy, like the recent relief efforts which are still taking place for the Pakistan floods. We see Eid Carnivals taking place to celebrate our holidays in a fun, Islamic environment for our children and families. Along with that, our full-time Islamic schools are growing, allowing for a good education without the stresses of negative societal peer pressure that is common in public schools. And this is just the beginning. The ideas are endless and it is up to us, as Muslims representing our perfect religion, to promote it positively in ways that will attract the fearful who have yet to see the beauty of Islam.

Holding interfaith gatherings are becoming more essential in our country today. Unfortunately, they are few & far apart in our community. We should attempt to make interfaith programs regular and consistent – creating relationships with non-Muslim leaders will allow for open communication and exchange of ideas – like a joint dinner, carnival, or picnic. Monthly visits can be made in groups from both sides, so that we can say we are doing justice to our religion by sharing it with all of humankind as it was intended, and open our hearts and minds to others. Other ideas can range from community service volunteer efforts: getting involved in programs such as Habitat for Humanity, or doing a Walk or Race for a cure.

We know that Allah (SWT) will protect His religion from being dishonored. However, it is our responsibility to show the true colors of Islam through our actions, using the amount of people-power we have but do not utilize enough. If we can join hands and creatively use our minds to practice positively, with the help of Allah (SWT), the pointless fear of Islam in the world today can be transformed into real, fruitful understanding.

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## The Effect of 9/11 on Islam in America

By Sheikh Husayn El-Mekki Abdullah-Aziz

Part II of II

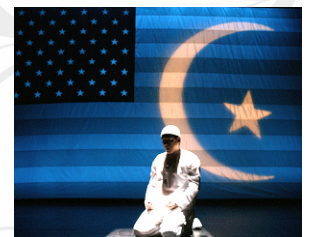
### Reaction from Muslim Citizens

The 'land of the free' had transmogrified into the land of disarray, utter chaos and mayhem. The constitutional rights of freedom of religion, freedom of speech and the pursuit of happiness became an elusive hope for American Muslims who found themselves victims of September 11th. Many Muslims felt obligated to buy American flags and boast of their patriotic views. Some Muslim women opted to take off their hijab out of fear of being a walking target for this newfound discrimination. Although law-abiding Muslim citizens were not even remotely involved, it offered some peace of mind to those who were now against Islam to hear the many Muslim leaders and organizations come forth and offer their condolences to the families of those who were innocent victims as they condemned such terrorist acts.

### Stereotype

Celina Childs mentions in 'Breaking the Stereotype of Islam' that 'when the word "Muslim" is mentioned, some people automatically think of the word "terrorist".' News coverage rarely mentioned a Muslim perpetrator without mentioning ...

*Continued on page 8*





*IEC Board of Directors (BOD) believes that the center belongs and is dependent on all members of this community. In an effort to increase awareness in regards to the community happenings, Wahdat will publish reports of open board meetings. May this effort encourage more involvement of community members and increase their enthusiasm for IEC matters.*

## IEC Board Updates

**Ramadhan Programs:** The BOD appreciates the community's support for the recent Ramadhan program. We thank all the volunteers who made this possible. May Allah accept their effort and contributions. We thank the Ulama for their discourses and advice. The children and youth in particular participated actively in the Holy Quran and knowledge contest as well as in the Al-Quds Day Rally. The enthusiastic support of the larger Houston community for the Eid Salaat is a reflection of the community's desire for unity. We are in the process of seeking a formal survey to further improve our Ramadan activities for the future.

**Al- Zahra Committee (AZC) :** The bylaws were finalized and approved. The executive Committee members were nominated by the ladies who had volunteered to be part of the committee and approved by the BOD. The Program Director was selected to be the BOD representative to coordinate activities with the AZC. We appeal to the larger community to help the AZC activities in an enthusiastic manner to further improve programs for the mininaat.

**PAKISTAN FLOOD RELIEF:** IEC has contributed \$33K collected from the community to Imamia Medic's International, an NGO of the U.N. with an active local network in Pakistan. In addition, our community has actively participated in providing goods as well as contributions to other organizations. The flood victims are still in dire need of help. Please continue to help by going online at [www.iec-houston.org](http://www.iec-houston.org) and making contributions via our disaster relief fund section.

**GENERAL BODY MEETING:** Over 200 members attended our GBM held on September 18th, 2010. We welcome our new members and appreciate our longstanding members for their sincere support and feedback for the continual improvement of the center's activities. Key items discussed:

**Long Term Planning Committee (LTPC):** The BOD thanked the LTPC for their tireless effort for the past six months. The LTPC presented several options for the expansion of IEC. These will be further studied in the near future.

**FINANCES:** A very detailed financial report was presented and is available for the member's perusal. We thank those who have contributed for the Fatimiyah fund, automatic donations and for our programs. We are in need of your contributions.

**EDUCATION:** An update on AHS, Sunday School, Farsi School and Clearlake Branch( Gate Of Knowledge School) was provided. The AHS- HR Committee is in the process of recruitment for the post of Principal. The AHS- IEB Fund-raising Committee as well as the PTO appeals to the community to come forward in the sawab-e- jareya to educate our future generation and for the progress of Islam in this country.

**YOUTH;** The Al-Qasim Camp Committee is actively working with the Youth Director for the upcoming Annual Family Camp to be held at Camp Cho- Yeh on the weekend of Oct- 8-10, 2010. Please register on our website if you've not already done so.

## Quran Competition Report By Hyder Syed



The holy month of Ramadhan offers all of us a unique chance to read and recite the Holy Qur'an daily. In order to give the children an opportunity to brush up on their recitation and understanding of the Divine Words, IEC conducts a Holy Quran recitation and knowledge contest annually at this time. Alhamdulillah this year we had a record number of children who registered in the contest. The suras were divided into 5 levels that comprised the entire Juz 'amma (30th part). Children selected their own level of comfort and recited initially in front of individual judges. Based on their recitation they were permitted to recite in public for the second round.

The following were the winners at each level:

Level 1: 1) Khizr Aun Panjwani 2) Fatima Batool 3) Hasan Dhanji

Level 2: Sakina Abideen, Sakina Mirza and Abbas Abideen all achieved first place

Level 3: 1) Mohammad Sajjad Jafri 2) Gazina Kulsoom and Zakariah Kader 3) Hiba Hasan

Level 4: 1) Isaac Busaleh and Hussain Syed 2) Zaid Bhojani 3) Asad Ebrahim

The knowledge contest consisted of questions that were formulated based on the same group of suras. Children were provided the questions ahead of time but had to put in the effort to search the answers by reading the suras. Masha-Allah all the participants did very well on the test which was given as a written

as well as an oral test.

All children were recognized at the Eid Dinner and gifts/awards were presented to them for their participation.

We hope that with constant encouragement and an opportunity to challenge themselves, the children will develop an understanding of the fundamental message of the Holy Quran and be able to recite the verses fluently.

Many thanks go to the organizers, judges, the board and the support of the community to make this event successful.



*The views expressed in Wahdat are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views & policies of IEC, its management and/or staff.*



*This is the last part of a three part series.*



# NEW BEGINNINGS

By Xavier Vasquez

part III of III

It's odd to say that I waited the next days and weeks, but that's what I happened and yet, there was something more. Unlike never before, I dipped into the fountain of Islamic religious knowledge and what I found was something I never expected, a religion in which curiosity was never reigned in and in which every question was welcomed with warmth and sincerity. I spent hours and hours studying what I could and talking with the Muslim woman whom I knew. For every answer, I found a hundred more questions filling my mind and as a result, I would fall asleep at my desk, exhausted and tired from spending nearly every other waking hour discovering the beauty of Islam. Ironically, a verse in the Old Testament would intrigue me and shed a new light upon what I had known. It was the Book of Deuteronomy chapter 18 verse 18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." At first I thought nothing of it, but then just as quickly, I slowly pondered what I had just read. This verse and many others like it in the New Testament opened up my understanding of who this Prophet was and I began to accept that indeed, this Prophet was a prophet of God, it was Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). After this time when I spent hours reading and reading more, I would go to work, where I would hear demeaning jokes made of Muslims. While I had the opportunity to counter their ignorance, I didn't and every time, I felt ashamed in front of God. I would walk away and apologize to Him only to realize that I was openly talking to God. It was at this point when I discovered that I began to believe in Him again. Maybe I never was atheist, maybe all I had done was to forget. Maybe I just needed to remember something my soul always knew.

Time seemed to slow as my knowledge increased and then just as quickly it flew by in relation to the hours of the day. I would still wake up shivering in front of my computer screen and continue to read, refusing sleep when my mind was hungry for more. In the weeks after visiting IEC, I spoke to my co-worker who seemed more sad and quiet than ever before. She began to talk of her grandfather who was in Iran suffering from an illness that would soon hospitalize him. She tried hard to fight back the tears as they glossed over her luminous eyes as she desperately whispered, "I wish I was there with him." I looked at her knowing there was nothing I could do to help this wonderful woman who, through Islam, had become so important to me. She stood there and nothing brilliant came to my mind to say to her. "I will pray for him," she cried. "I will, too," I said. "You will?" I looked at her without hesitation and said, "Of course, I will."

A few days passed by and one night, while alone at work, I finally gave myself the time to speak to God humbly, privately and secretly as I began to call to Him. It was the first time in a long time that I turned towards Him and prayed for another person in all sincerity. To be honest, I really didn't know what to say at that point. All the rituals I had been taught as a child didn't seem right anymore, so I sat down and I just spoke to Him. I have only told her what I prayed about and the exact words I said, but for the second time, I repeat

myself. Here is my prayer:

"God...I know that I haven't been the best person lately, but I'm praying to you for her grandfather. He's really important to her and there's nothing I can do to help. She doesn't have her family here and if he dies, it'll hurt her too much. Please help him. Please. And there's something else: I don't know what you want from me anymore. I don't know if what I'm doing is right, I don't know if what I'm learning is what you want me to learn, but if you want me to become Muslim, then let me know that it's okay to be a Muslim. Amen."

At that moment, I felt a tremendous numbness in my forehead. A pressure unlike anything I had ever felt before began to encircle my head and I closed my eyes from the sheer pain of it. I tried to rub my temples, but it didn't help and as I tried to stand, my body became weak and I collapsed back down. I tried yet again to rise and this time the numbness overtook my legs and the rest of my body. I sat there dazed and motionless. I had no energy and yet, the pressure only increased, seeming to come from both within and from without, a pressure centering upon my forehead. Drained physically, I would sit there as time passed by, my eyes unable to focus and my breathing slowed. I sat there not knowing what had just happened to me.

Three days later, on a Sunday, I visited a Catholic church with the Muslim woman I knew. She had always wanted to see one up-close, so we met at one by our workplace. Unable to get passed the locked door, we walked the grounds and soon settled in a small courtyard. We talked about religion as an aroma of church flowers surrounded us. The sky in the crisp afternoon air, a rich blue hanging overhead revealing a moon only half full while we sat in the cold shadow of a church that towered above us. After awhile we went back to work, and once again she and I happily talked about religion as the people around us faded away into the background. She began to talk about the things that Muslim do in everyday life to stay in a state of purity. It began to dawn on me that for the past seven months I had been doing the same things. "Xavier, are you sure you're not Muslim," she asked yet again. I smiled never answering, as I quietly contemplated our discussion. She continued to speak; "I read a story about a scientist who did research about how electrons build up in our body. He said that the best way to rid ourselves of this excess energy which leads to stress is to ground ourselves. But then he said he studied people who prayed and the best way to ground yourself was to touch your head on the ground like Muslims do when they do sajdah...."

Her voice began to echo within me and although I tried to bury my emotions, it became clear what had happened to me just a few days before when that numbness overtook my body. I looked at her and began to walk away to a more private place away from the prying eyes of onlookers, as she followed. Unable to walk anymore, I stopped and then I heard her soft voice ask, "Xavier, what is wrong?" I turned to her as my vision began to blur. "You're going to make me cry. All those things you talked about...I do those things,



too. But that last thing you said, about praying...I prayed for your grandfather and when I did I asked God if it was okay for me to be Muslim. And afterwards, I felt this pressure...on my head...it was God touching me wasn't it? He was telling me to bow down. He was telling me that it's okay. He's telling me that I am Muslim.

No longer able to hold back the tears of my emotions as I realized that Almighty Allah had touched me in some way, that He answered me and that now He was lifting a veil from my eyes, I broke down into sobs. Shaking uncontrollably, my head buried in my arms as I braced myself against a wall, I cried with the realization that Allah never lost me. I just needed to fall a little and before I could harm myself any more, He saved me. I cried not out of fear or pain, but because I was saved by His mercy. I could barely breathe, tears flooding my eyes, cascading from my face in streams, my body trembling as I gasped for air, and then I looked at her briefly. She seemed so surprised and her gentle face brightened to a warm smile as she spoke, "Xavier...I'm really jealous of you. God loves you so much right now. You are like a newborn baby. You are Muslim, Xavier! You are Muslim!"

I looked down and continued to weep. I couldn't stop, I just couldn't stop. She continued, "I think that you're crying because you believe there is someone who looks after you all the time, takes care of you and loves you more than any one." I just shook my head, "yes." I began to feel everything that I knew, everything worldly and wrong disappear as His light shone upon me, as every denial and every lonely moment began to crumble away. I didn't know exactly what to do, I was so relieved, I was so happy, so full of wonder and exasperation. I could barely hold myself up to stand and several times I nearly collapsed. I realized as I had begun to fall towards Hell, Allah pulled me back and cradled me in His mercy. With one sweep of His magnificence, He washed me clean and revived my soul with His love. He cleared the darkness from my eyes, my cloak of anger dissolved by His gentle grace and then He breathed new life into me. For the first time, I knew I was Muslim.

After a time, unwilling to go back to work, she and I walked away to talk privately. "I want to go back to the mosque," I told her. She made a phone call to the Muslim brother who first guided me to IEC as I left to wash my face. Though I would try to stop, tears kept replenishing my eyes and I found serenity in that. I returned to her when she gave me his phone number and she looked at me with a smile that never left her face, "Right now, God loves you so much, Xavier. He loves you so much." My only response was to close my eyes and let my tears escape to fall silently onto the ground. After work,

I spent the night dreaming into the star filled night and felt the cold air brush over me. Finally exhausted from the day, I went home to lie down and slept in peace for the first time in years. I awoke the next morning in time to watch the Sun break through the darkness and marveled at Allah's tapestry of colors wash across His sky. I knew then that the day before was not a dream and that He had always been here with me. I was Muslim and I knew that is what He had always intended. I thought of all the times He saved me from myself, all the times He saved me from the evil of others and how despite all my arrogance, He had finally humbled me with a touch of His power. And I thanked Him for answering my prayer.

Back home I looked at the unopened Qu'ran that had been sitting on my desk for weeks and for the first time I read the true words of Allah. I stood in the direction of Mecca and I learned how to pray to Him. I stood before Him quietly and recited the words I have come to love from a book that stays in my heart from our Prophet who is our guide. The following Friday, I met my fellow Muslim brother, who had first guided me to IEC. That night I prayed with him and with a few other brothers in the conference room. Later on we would walk to the top of the garage in the cold of the bare night as the Moon hovered above. I knew that this was my new life now and I began to fall in love with Islam: a love that never ceases to end. After a few weeks, my Muslim friend asked me, "Xavier, you've lived like a Muslim now. How do you feel?" "I know that Allah always wanted me to be Muslim. It's just that it took me all the years to discover it." Then I recited Surah Al-Hamd and as I did, she looked at me with a shy and endearing smile, saying "I am happy for you, Xavier. I am really happy for you." I smiled and said, "So am I. So am I."

I once said writing this part was supposed to be easy partly because I can never forget its beauty, but I'm wrong. This is the hardest part because I will never be able to describe every intricacy, every nuance and the delicate beauty that fills my heart when I reflect on what has happened to me and what continues to unfold in my life every day. The beginning of this story told of the end of what I was and this part explains the beginning of who I will become. This is my life...a Muslim.

*And remember Yunus when he went away in anger and imagined that We would not have power over him; then he cried out from the darkness: "There is no god but You! Glory be to you, verily I was of the unjust ones!" Then We responded to him and delivered him from the distress, thus do We deliver the believers. – Quran 21:87-88*

## Special Programs at IEC

### **IEC Annual Adult Quran Competition**

#### **Results**

Congrats to our winners and thanks to all participants!

**Winners:** Br. Mohsin Shahnarad, Br. Ghulam

Habib, Br. Muhammad Chawala

**Runners-up:** Sr. Nasreen Chawala, Sr. Madiha

Mirza, Sr. Syeda Jaffery

### **Shahadat of Imam Sadiq (as)**

Sunday, October 3rd (Night of 25th Shawwal)

Maghribein Prayers 7:22 pm

Quran Recitation 7:50 pm

Poetry 8:00 pm

Multimedia Presentation 8:10 pm

English Speech H.I Sheikh Mekki 8:15 pm

Noha / Matam 9:00 pm

Tabarruk 9:15 pm

Poetry 7:50 pm

English Speech by H.I Hur Shabbiri 8:00 pm

Dua Kumayl 8:45 pm

Tabarruk 9:15 pm

### **Wiladat of Imam Reza (as)**

Tuesday, October 19th (11th Zulq'adah\*)

Magribein Prayers 7:04 pm

Program Starts 7:30 pm

### **2nd IEC Ramadhan Table Tennis**

#### **Tournament: Results**

Winners: Br. Ameer-ul-Hasan

Runner-up: Br. Shah Nawaz Sabuwala

### **Wiladat of Hazrat Masuma (as)**

Thursday, October 7th ( 1st Zulq'adah\*)

Magribein Prayers 7:15 pm

Quran Recitation 7:45 pm

\* All dates are subject to moon-sighting.





# Understanding Intellectual Freedom *by Shaheed Baqir as-Sadr*

Among the fruits of the intellectual freedom in Islam is the war it wages against imitation and stagnant thinking, against mental submission to myths or to ideas of others without consciousness or scrutiny. Islam aims thereby towards the creation of an analytical mind or an experimental one in man.

It is not enough to establish the free mind in man by just saying to him: "You may think as you please" [and that is all], as has the western civilization suggested. [This is because] this expansion of freedom will be at the expense of freedom itself, and it quite often leads to hues of intellectual slavery symbolized in imitation, fanaticism and the glorification of [conjectural] superstitions [with no intellectual base].

Rather, in order to create the free mind, according to Islam, man has to nurture the analytical or experimental mind which does not accept an idea

without scrutiny, nor does it believe in a doctrine unless it is proved, so that this conscious mind may ensure the intellectual freedom and protect man from misusing it because of imitation, fanaticism or scruples.

In fact, this is but the share of the Islamic struggle for the internal liberation of man. Just as it emancipated man's will from the slavery of temptation of human desire... so has it liberated the human consciousness from the slavery of imitation, fanaticism and superstitions. In both this and that has man become free in his mind and will.

"... So give good news to my Servants who listen to the word and follow the best of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect." - (39:17-18)

"We have revealed the Quran to you so that you could

tell the people what has been revealed to them and so that perhaps they will think." (16:44)

"... Those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if you are truthful." (2:111)

"When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah has revealed: " they say: "Nay! We shall follow the ways of our ancestors. " What! Even though their ancestors were void of reason and guidance?!" (2:170)



# Discrimination at Work

By Syed Ali Jafri, Lawyer

Due to the Islamaphobia in our society today, it would not be surprising if some members of our community faced discrimination at their workplace because of their religious beliefs or ethnic background. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces the federal laws against job discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, and disability.

The categories in the above list, including your religion, are each referred to as a "protected class." If you feel you have been discriminated against at your job based on a protected class, you may file a charge with the EEOC. The EEOC will then investigate the claim and if it determines that there was "cause" (a valid reason for your charge) they will attempt to remedy the problem either through mediation, negotiation, or in some cases by filing a lawsuit against your employer (for free). If the EEOC does not find "cause" you then have the right to file a civil lawsuit if you choose to do so.

To prove a case of discrimination, there are three factors that must be considered. First, the individual bringing the charge must be a member of a protected class. For example, they are a Muslim. Secondly, the individual must suffer a materially adverse employment action. For example they have been fired, or disciplined. Finally, the individual who brings the charge must be able to show that their co-workers who are different in respect to the protected class were not subject to the same type of treatment. For example, their Christian, Jewish, or atheist co-workers were not fired or disciplined.

If these three factors are proven, the employer now must respond with a legitimate non-discriminatory reason to explain their actions. If the reason for the dissimilar treatment is deemed false or pre-textual, then the individual bringing the charge prevails. For example, if the Employer is not able to give a convincing reason why the treatment of the Muslim was different than the treatment given to the similarly situated Christian employee, or if the EEOC

does not believe the employers stated reason, then the Muslim would have proven that discrimination occurred. For more information on employment discrimination visit [www.EEOC.gov](http://www.EEOC.gov).

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# Our Environment

## Worldly Contentment

By Ali Abedi

In the last issue we discussed wastefulness and how we must bear in mind the end result of our consumption. This issue will delve into the topic of the impact over-consuming at the production end and how the implications affect our planet.

The verse mentioned to the right of this article is very similar to verse one of Surah At-Takathur: "The mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things of this world) diverts you (from the more serious things)." In either case, we see that hoarding and excessive accumulation of wealth is frowned upon by Divine Decree. These verses shed light on one of the primary threats to the sustainability of our planet. Human consumption is extremely high in developed countries to exist as a sustainable practice. Often, due to economic growth and pressure from manufacturers, interest groups and lobbies, the governments of developed countries buy into the mentality that increased consumption leads to generally higher standard of wellbeing. This is a flawed mentality due to the fact that the high consumption rate in countries such as America depletes resources from around the world (not just the US) in the production, export and acquisition of consumer goods. The depletion of these resources, the pollution emitted into the surrounds that results for such massive-scale production, and increase in landfill volumes in locales where consumers buy these products have both short-term and long-term negative impacts on the well-being of the citizens of these developed countries. Increasing soil and air pollution locally, while potentially being affected by water pollution at production sites of the goods are a few of the ways that the "externalized costs" of the environmental impact are indeed paid for by the consumers and producers of these products.

In a tradition from Prophet Isa (Jesus) – may God hasten his reappearance – he states: "Do not look at the possessions of the world-worshippers, for the luster of their riches will dull the light of your imaan (faith)."<sup>1</sup> This hadith brings to light one of the main reasons why this over-consumption may exist. The pursuit of worldly riches is one that has no end. Rarely does one find a contented individual. This path has led many to ruin in the past, and the people of this day and age are no exception to this. We must strive to be thankful for the blessings of our Lord without comparing them to

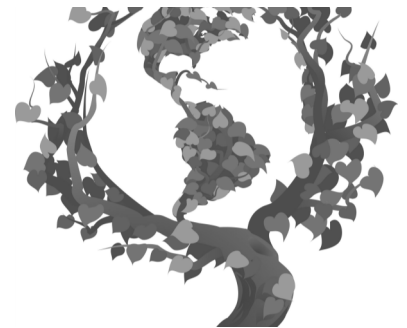
those of any other people. Imam Ali (a.s.) states: "I searched for self-sufficiency (richness) and did not find it but in contentment. Therefore, be content to become wealthy." [2]

Now that we have realized the significance of being content, let us examine some of the reasons why we are in the predicament regarding unsustainable consumerism. Around the 1950's the government-backed scheme of "planned obsolescence" and "perceived obsolescence" went into effect in the United States. This was a general design that involved the purposeful destruction, malfunction or out-datedness of consumer goods to promote more purchases. This mentality is still around and the scheme is used in the engineering of cars, toys, computers and many other items that we use on a daily basis. With perceived obsolescence, the mentality of buying the newer, next model often and frequently is a dangerous one that does not bode well in relation to the depletion of our natural resources. When customers feel that their possessions are outdated, even if the items are working perfectly well, they will purchase new items. Not all customers recycle their older products which they are now forced to believe are outdated. The mindset of "buy, buy, buy" is what the manufacturers and the government promote, and that is exactly what needs to be reformed in America and even among our Muslim communities. According to consensus in the scientific community, if all humans were to lead life as Americans do, the sheer need for resources would be fulfilled by not one Earth but as many five earths! With only about 5% of the world population, Americans use about 30 percent of the global resources. Unfortunately, as we see with the Tragedy of Commons, individuals who are not content with their share of resources over-consume which translates to another individual having to suffer due to the limited nature of our resources. For example, the average Indian that may consume 1 lb of grain directly as part of his diet has an American counterpart that eats at least 9 lbs of grain everyday, mostly in indirect diet forms.

Along with building contentment within ourselves and encouraging this practice among our community members, colleagues and family members, there are other measures that we could also take. We must be fully

*Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose vegetation pleases the farmer; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.*

– Quran 57:20



**Fact:** In the last 3 decades, one-third of the planet's resources, have been consumed.

(TheStoryofStuff.com)

**Tip:** Buy re-usable, replenish the environment as best as you could, practice perseverance in the face of product marketing that promotes consumerism, and educate others!



**Worldly Contentment continued** ... conscious of the nature and composition of the consumer-goods that we purchase. We must try to purchase minimal impact products that use few raw materials to produce and that could easily be recycled if needed. Additionally, we must fight "perceived obsolescence" by encouraging others to reuse their products or consider repairing their goods as an option before immediately replacing them with newer models. We could try using more and more of the long-lasting products in public to shatter the public image that NEW is the only way to live.

On the topic of growing more and more content with our possessions, it is imperative that we recognize that irresponsible consumerism has an immense toll on the environment both at the production end as well as the ultimate disposal. Becoming content can safeguard us from using products from companies with harmful policies towards the earth and other people. Corporate

connections to environmental disasters and corrupt governments world wide remind us of the need to be vigilant. Altogether, it is a religious duty as well as an environmental one to remain content, don't over-consume, and to inform others to do so as well.

[1] Al-Muhajatul Baydha 328/7

[2] Baharul Anwar 91/399/69



## My Ziyarat Experience By Fatima Syed

Every believer experiences a moment in his or her life in which the truth of their religion suddenly becomes evident; a moment through which they develop a genuine, unadulterated connection with their Creator. And through which the deceiving façade of this world slowly gives way to reality and the futility of striving after its materialism becomes apparent. I had such a moment this past summer, when I was given the honor of going for the ziyarat of seven Imams in Iran and Iraq.

My trip was by far the most enriching and wholesome experience of my life, and because of it, I have gained a more comprehensive perspective of my religion and what it truly means to be a Shia. In every haram I went to, I developed a unique bond with each Imam, and through these connections, I was able to gain a better understanding of the direction in which I needed to strive to attain the ultimate goal of Allah's pleasure. Perhaps the most memorable part of my journey was in the holy city of Qom, when I saw Masjid-e-Jamkaran for the first time. To know that this was a place where Imam Mahdi's presence was guaranteed and to experience the tangibility of the existence of my Imam was an awe-inspiring and incredibly emotional experience. In Karbala, we were able to see exactly where each tragedy of the day of Ashura occurred. This added an entirely new dimension for me to a tradition that forms the foundations of our Shia beliefs. Going to Najaf was also an unforgettable experience because I felt that Imam Ali (as) had personally invited me for ziyarat and that his call was the reason I was there. When the time came to leave Najaf-e-Ashraf, I felt like I was bidding farewell to my father and the pain that came with that was almost unbearable. Going for ziyarat revolutionized my perspective on religion. No longer are the Imams simply a list of twelve arbitrary personalities with religious significance for me. Instead, now, each and every one of them is an individual of the highest order with whom I've been able to develop a unique connection. Now, when I hear the names of any of the Imams I visited, it evokes all the emotions I felt in their haram and I remember the sense of security that filled me when I realized that they had heard my supplications. I came away from my trip with many realizations, and I wanted to share two of them with you.



emphasize the importance of going for ziyarat at an early age. It is pivotal for the maintenance of Iman and to develop a personal connection with your religion as soon as possible so that you become self-motivated to stay on Sirat al Mustaqeem. Before going for ziyarat, I felt like reading duas and ziyarats were tedious activities, but now, I feel eager at the prospect of having the opportunity to connect once more with our holy personalities and giving them my salaams. Another important lesson I took away was the importance of our ulema. I returned from my trip with a newfound respect for our aalims, because after having the honor of meeting several scholars who were undoubtedly some of the most brilliant people I had ever come across, I realized how

incredibly difficult it was to become a Shia scholar. One of the misconceptions that our communities suffer from is that those who choose to become aalims have few prospects outside of religious learning and that they have a limited knowledge of anything outside of religion. We are quick to label any maulana with a language barrier as inept and of little use, when in fact these people are amongst the most capable members of our society. I had the chance to visit the Hawza in Qom, and I can assure you that becoming an aalim is no easy feat. I met aalims who knew just as much about theoretical physics and biology as they knew about fiqh and sharia. There is a type of wajibaat in Islam known as Wajib-e-Kifayi, which basically refers to a responsibility on an entire community. Becoming an aalim is an example of Wajib-e-Kifayi, and therefore, until one person from a community devotes his life to studying and preaching Islam, it is obligatory on the ENITRE community to go to a religious seminary and become aalims. We are able to become lawyers, and doctors and engineers and architects because our aalims took this responsibility off our shoulders by dedicating their lives to studying Islam. Keep this in mind next time you feel compelled to criticize a scholar, and put in effort to show our aalims how much you appreciate them. This is what I learned through ziyarat. It was not simply a chance for me to read duas in different holy cities, but a means through which I could refine my soul. No Shia should deny his or herself this opportunity, so take my advice, and go for ziyarat as soon as you can!



*Sister Fatima Syed is a former student of Al-Hadi School of Accelerative Learning.*

First, as someone who speaks from first-hand experience, I cannot adequately



# The Effects of 9/11 on Islam in America

By Sheikh Husayn El-Mekki Abdullah-Aziz

**Continued from front page...** his faith. This had a great impact on public opinion. The biased slant of media coverage, although evident to many, did not change the disposition of those who had grown to become passionate in opposition of Muslims and Islam. In 'Stereotypes of Muslims, Their Causes and Their Consequence', John Sides states: We investigate the stereotypes that Americans possess of both Muslims and Muslim-Americans. We find that negative stereotypes relating to violence and trustworthiness are remarkably commonplace and that little distinguishes Muslims from Muslim-Americans in the public's mind. These stereotypes are underpinned by a similar set of factors that underpin stereotypes of blacks, Hispanics and Asians – notably authoritarian values.

Furthermore, these stereotypes have consequences; those with less favorable views of Muslims are more likely to support several measures that are part of the broader War on Terror. One could argue that even in this attempt to vocalize and break down such stereotypes, the writer by categorization, has alluded to and constructed yet another stereotype in the process with the distinction between "Muslims" and "Muslim-Americans".

## Islamophobia

The event was regarded as the 'advent of World War III'. Policies became a tool for targeting Muslims. The United States government has stated that they have no war against Islam itself and only have a war against extremists and terrorists. However, the disturbing Islamophobic actions and statements made by prominent politicians and government officials differ greatly. United States Representatives such as Virgil H. Goode, Jr. (Republican-Virginia) was quoted as saying, 'I fear that in the next century we will have many more Muslims in the United States if we do not adopt the strict immigration policies that I believe are necessary to preserve the values and beliefs traditional to the United States of America'. And even more anti-Islamic sentiment is plain as day what United States attorney General John Ashcroft publicly stated: 'Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends his son to die for you.'

## The Press Coverage of Islam, Exposure and Globalization

Although the press coverage of the 9/11 attacks did not favor Muslims as they had all been placed in a single category as one single entity, it did cause Islam to become the 'hot topic' of journalism and media. In remote very rural regions of America where contact with Muslims was less likely, this incident had caused everyone in every place to be, at the minimum, aware that Islam existed. The positivity of this is certainly debatable, as many would argue that only negative talk was aroused.

## Education

Fields of study such as Islamic studies, Middle Eastern studies and studies of Middle Eastern languages such as Arabic, Urdu, Pashto and Farsi increased to an all-time high as the demand increased, not only in academia but in the government as well. Conferences and seminars were attended throughout the country and various universities. Even some public schools were given budgets to acquire Middle Eastern and Asian language courses. An unprecedented demand for awareness and knowledge of Islamic civilization, culture, language and religion grew in academic domains.

## Alternative Media

Organizations, Muslim and non-Muslim, sought to bring a balance to the media portrayal of Muslims. Countless websites were launched, and several free air satellite TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, short films, and other media coverage put great focus on showing what true Islam represented and who true Muslims were. Some Muslim organizations claim that the word 'Islam' and its variations ('Muslim', 'Islamic', etc.) were amongst the top words searched on the Internet. Innumerable amounts of media were constructed condemning the atrocities of 9/11.

## Increase in Awareness and Interest in Islam

Controversy always stirs curiosity, and for many non-Muslims this tragic event led to research. For many, the result was learning the truth of Islam. A new respect and edification emerged. They became able to differentiate between an individual and a group of people's actions as opposed to the true beliefs themselves. The reality is that 'Islam' and 'Muslim' are not synonymous. Islam itself is a religion, and a Muslim is someone who makes a verbal claim to adhere to the principles of the religion or perhaps is just born into the religion. But the nature of human beings is that they possess free will and are not bound or forced to hold fast to even the most ethical or well reasoned of views. Therefore in many cases 'Muslim' is just a label like any other adjective such as 'doctor', 'student', or 'Christian'; and while the principles of being a doctor and healing the sick are admirable, it is safe to say that every doctor is not a good or upright doctor. This obviously does not represent any flaw in the field of medicine, and the same analogy can be made for Muslims in America. This realization has become somewhat evident for some non-Muslims in America, as displayed in the study of post 9/11 reactions of non-Muslims towards Muslims done by ABC (the American Broadcasting Corp.). For many who did not embrace Islam, understanding more about the peaceful nature of the religion helped them to gain a more objective and balanced disposition. Even military soldiers like Chris Irwin who were part of the United States defense embraced Islam. The effect of 9/11 was clearly not limited to non-Muslims and many Muslims, especially second and third generation Muslims, found themselves with a need to fulfill their own identities as Muslims and as Westerners and to give substance to their previous acculturation of Islam. This urged the many college and university MSA (Muslim Student Association) groups to become more active and for youth to re-establish their own identity representing both the future of the West and the future of Islam.

Word association would be redefined to an extent as scholars began to question terminologies that had become normalized, such as 'fundamentalist', and discover its true Christian related origin and more correct usage. Some intellectuals have concluded that even the election of President Barak Obama is a result of September 11th, the political circumstances of the time, and the readiness for change. Also, it signified the American people's willingness to embrace a president with a name rooted in Arabic and born to a Muslim father and blatantly different from the traditional United States presidents in appearance. This all was a testament to a newfound religious and social tolerance which had surfaced.

## A Nation at War

The dissatisfaction of the American public with the wars abroad resulted in public support of Muslim regions. Following September 11th was the explicit War on Terror, which resulted in the American presence in the Middle East, namely in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the early stages, when many Americans found themselves still very hostile towards Islam and Muslims, it was easy to support such wars. However, after countless expensive years and a rising death toll of United States troops and an alarming increase in troops gone AWOL (absent without leave), the public opinion changed significantly. Non-Muslim Americans began regular anti-war protests. This became a basis for mending a torn relationship.

## Interfaith Networking

This common ground of anti-war protests and views helped bridge a gap between Muslim and non-Muslims in America and even globally. This made it easier for alliances to be formed and for interfaith networking to take place. Muslims and non-Muslims alike were welcomed by a multitude of organizations unifying and denouncing the wars which resulted from 9/11. Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and religiously non-affiliated scholars and leaders alike worked together to speak out.

## Reassessment of Judgments

The standard for measuring Muslims in a just and democratic society should be the same standard used for followers of any other religion. Essentially justice would advocate that an individual is judged on his or her own merit and ac-



tions, and a verbal claim of religious affiliation cannot be used as a means or basis for passing rational judgment.

### Boomerang Effect of Anti-Islamic Propaganda

Much propaganda has been channeled through media illustrations of a very dangerous and dreadful Islam. Each major news agency can be found to have been guilty of unbalanced media coverage, and this is evident still. Some debate that this was a carefully calculated attack against Islam to justify the War on Terror. Nonetheless, what did emerge from the dusty shadows of the devastating event of September 11th was the need to comprehend Muslims and Islam. Years later, Islam has risen in America; drawing in more converts than ever before.

### Growth of Islam

It is impossible to say that 9/11 did not affect Muslims in America as many suffered unique forms of discrimination. As the media sensationalization drew global and national interest, ironically the peaceful truths of Islam were unveiled for many who sought to understand them, and a conscious differentiation was made between 'Muslim', 'Islam', and 'terror'. Today an estimated 6.5 - 8 million Muslims reside in the United States. The Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life shows the United States Muslim population in 2007 at over 3 million. And the Carnegie Endowment for International

Peace shows the 2008 estimated Muslim population of America to be at nearly 6.5 million. The American Religious Identification Survey (A.R.I.S.) indicated there were approximately 500,000 United States Muslims in 1990 and double that number (over 1 million) in 2001. And while these statistics will always be debated due to inconsistent methods of measure, what can be certain is that Islam remains consistently the fastest growing religion in the United States. This is evidence of the reported 25% increase of Muslim from 1989-1998 in North America. American Muslims, wanted or unwanted, have become an established and ingrained part of society. Arguably the greatest impact of 9/11 on Islam was the rise of Islam and the unification of American citizens. A country assembled upon the infrastructure of diversity has thrived through trying times and adversity only to overcome the 9/11 ruination and calamity and show resilience in face of loss of life and loss of tranquility, but in the aftermath, Americans would need to garner understanding and neutrality to re-embrace the composition of tolerance of difference and diversification which is the fabric of the liberty and unity of a great nation.

*This was the second and final part of the article. You may find part I of this article in the Sept issue of Wahdat Note that this article was well-sourced, and Wahdat left out a compilation of sources due to space constraints. For source material for facts presented in this article, please contact Sheikh Mekki.*

## Contemplate on the Quran like a book of nature by Shaheed Murtaza Mutahhari

The Qur'an itself strikes a middle course between the stagnant and narrow-minded attitude of the Akhbaris [who think ahadith must clarify all meanings of Quran] and the unwarranted and deviate interpretations of the Batinis [who think it only has esoteric, hidden meanings]. It recommends a course of sincere, disinterested study and asks for unbiased and unprejudiced meditation over its meanings. Not only the believers and the faithful, but even the infidels are invited by it to contemplate over its verses. The Qur'an demands that its verses should be first contemplated over, before forming any adverse opinion against them. Addressing the opponents, it says, why they don't ponder over the Qur'an, what sort of hearts they possess, they are as if shut close and sealed: **What, do they not ponder the Qur'an? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts? (47:24)**

The Qur'an also says in one of its verses: **(This is) a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good, that they may ponder the verses.**

That is, We have not sent the Qur'an to be kissed, embraced and put on the niche to gather dust, but for men to read and to contemplate about its contents: **That those endowed with understanding may ponder its signs and so remember. (38:29)**



Nature in accordance with its reality. He cannot define Nature in terms of his own caprices and inclinations. The Qur'an, like the book of Nature, is a book that has not been sent for a specific age and time. Had it been otherwise, all the secrets of the Qur'an would have been discovered in the past; this heavenly Book would not have presented its charm, freshness and vitality. But we see that the possibility of contemplation, reflection and discovery of new dimensions is inexhaustible in the case of this Holy Book. This is a point that has amply been emphasized and clarified by the Prophet and the Imams. In a tradition, it is related from the Prophet (S) that the Qur'an, like the sun and the moon, will present its movement and continuity; that is, the Qur'an is not static or monotonous. In some other place the Prophet has said that outwardly the Qur'an is beautiful and inwardly it is deep and unfathomable. In 'Uyun akhbar al-Rida, from the Imam al-Rida (A), it is quoted that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A) was asked about the secret of it that as the time passes and the more it is read and recited, the Qur'an increases in its novelty and freshness day by day. The Imam al-Sadiq (A) answered:

**Because the Qur'an is not for an exclusive age or for an exclusive people.**

The above verse and scores of other such verses emphasize the importance of contemplation in the Qur'an and interpretation of the Qur'anic verses, although not an interpretation based on personal caprices and bias, but a just, truthful and balanced interpretation free of all traces of selfish interests. If we try to comprehend the Qur'an in an honest and unbiased way, it is not at all necessary to solve all problems that we find in it. In this regard the Qur'an is similar to Nature. In Nature, too, a number of mysteries have neither been solved yet, nor can they be solved in present conditions, yet are likely to be solved in the future. Moreover, in studying and understanding nature, man has to tailor his ideas in accordance with Nature itself. He is forced to interpret

The Qur'an has been sent for all ages and for all human beings. It is so composed that in spite of changes in knowledge, outlook and approach through various times and ages, it surpasses all learning and knowledge in all ages. While it encompasses mysteries and abstruse intricacies for the reader of every age, at the same time it presents a great feast of meanings and ideas that can satiate the needs of every time in accordance with the capacity of that particular age.

Source: <http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/unique-quran.htm#QUNDER>



# The America That Even Most Americans Don't Know (Yet) By Muhammad Mahdi

*This is part II of an opinion-editorial series, taking a critical look at American political policies and discourse. Do you have your own perspective to share? Submit it to Wahdat!*

In our previous article we began an examination behind some of the driving forces of American policy, particularly the role of AIPAC (American Israeli Public Affairs Committee). AIPAC generally has 3 goals it works to achieve. The first of these goals, as previously described, is to control who is allowed in the government, and who must be removed. Its 2nd goal is to use the American government to gain American weapons and financial aid to support the Zionist cause. America's contributions to Israel by way of weaponry and money surpasses the combined aid it gives out to the whole rest of the world each year. As President Eisenhower had forewarned in his 1961 farewell address to the American people which has become historical known as the "Military-Industrial Complex Speech," the weapons industry and the profit of war has surpassed all other sectors of the American economy, and this war hungry element has come to control the government, instead of the American government controlling its own country. (Every time they ignite flames of war, Allah puts them out. They seek corruption in the earth and Allah does not like the agents of corruption. Quran 5:64) Furthermore, unbeknown to most Americans, Israel and its citizens have privileges in American law that are not only unique to Israel, but all together illegal to any other persons.

Thirdly, AIPAC uses America to manipulate the United Nations. Israel itself, with the help of the American government after World War II, was created by the United Nations under the agreement that the West Bank and Gaza were to belong to the Palestinians, and Jerusalem was to be controlled by the UN. Israel not only took over both the West Bank and Gaza, but it also kicked the UN out of Jerusalem and made it its capital! Every accord and agreement Israel has come to agree upon has been broken, and thanks to the United States, with no punishments. Even though Israel is the most condemned country in the history of the UN, America, as one of 5 nations with veto power, has vetoed 100% of all legislation drawn up against Israel.

Following World War II, President Truman worked to help the Zionist cause and the creation of Israel, even against the advice of his own cabinet that was of the opinion that the Arabs (with their oil) would be a far greater ally than the Jews, and that supporting the Zionist cause was all together bad for Amer-

ica. To show the extent of Zionist power, even Joseph Stalin of the former Soviet Union was brought under Zionist influence at a time when taking an anti-Israeli stance during the Cold War could have won the Soviets oil and great support from Middle Eastern 3rd world countries! Nonetheless, Zionism has since gained significant power in world politics through its manipulation of the American system. The lofty ambitions of American democracy as a fair and just system has been dashed by the influences of Zionism and its capitalist tendencies. This system, like nearly every other government in the world and other political systems that preceded it, has proven itself to be run by greed, instead of virtue.

To understand how America became entangled in the affairs of the Muslim world we must understand American policy in light of Zionism and oil, and how both became central at about the same time. We will begin with the American interests in Middle Eastern oil. At the close of World War II President Roosevelt's authorized Saudi Arabia to receive lend-lease aide under the rational "the defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the US." Saudi Arabia was seen as an ideal prize because of its rich oil supply, it had no foreign bases on its soil, was fully independent, and was never dominated by any other colonial powers. On Feb. 14, 1945, just two months before his death, Roosevelt met with King Adb al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud to solidify America's relation with the kingdom. King Saud was particularly concerned with the development of Zionism in Palestine protesting, "What injury have Arabs done to the Jews of Europe?" Roosevelt sent a letter to King Saud saying that the United States would consult him before coming to any decision regarding the Jews and Arabs, and would never act against the interests of the Arabs. The Middle East's honeymoon with the United States, however, would soon end with the eruption of the Palestinian conflict.



## October 2010 Calendar of Special Events

| Sun                                       | Mon | Tue                                       | Wed | Thu   | Fri                  | Sat           |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|----------------------|---------------|
|   |     |   |     |   | 1                    | 2             |
| 3<br>Martyrdom of Imam Sadiq (as) program | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7<br>Birthday of Hazrat Masuma (as) program | 8<br>IEC Camp Begins | 9<br>IEC Camp |
| 10<br>IEC Camp Concludes                  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15                   | 16            |
| 17  | 18  | 19<br>Birthday of Imam Ridha (as) program | 20  | 21  | 22                   | 23            |
| 24  | 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  | 29                   | 30            |

Program timings are subject to change. Please sign up for the IEC program mailing list and refer to the IEC website ([www.iec-houston.org](http://www.iec-houston.org)) for up-to-date information. Also note that the calendar indicates the night of programs at IEC and not necessarily the date of the actual historical occasions. All dates subject to moon-sighting.



# Camp Al-Qasim 2010: Camp Cho Yeh

**Friday Oct. 8 @7pm to Sunday Oct. 10 @ 2pm**

*Saturday:* Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner served. *Sunday:* Breakfast and Lunch served

*Activities:* Paintball, high ropes, swimming, archery, soccer, rock wall, basketball, and much more!

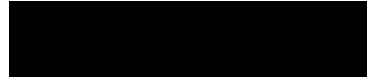
*Cost:* \$110 per person (all expenses paid). Ages 5 and under: FREE. Day Attendees (Saturday only/ no cabin stay): \$60

*Registration Deadline:* Friday October 1st.

Enjoy a fun-filled weekend of sports activities and lots of games.. Many Scholars to attend! Short motivation speeches and breakout discussion sessions for various age groups conducted by Maulana Mekki, Maulana Muhibullah, and Maulana Shabbiri. All fun and games for children ages 5-7.

Interactive Discussions for the following groups: Boys 8-13, Girls 8-13, Boys 14-21, Girls 14-21, Married Couples

There will Cabin leaders to ensure order, and Security to keep the peace. You do not want to miss this one!



The Al-Qasim-JUNIOR YOUTH CLUB'S (QJYC) Saturday Junior Youth Workshop is a weekly program that builds upon the artistic and aesthetic talents of junior youth, in order to help them

internalize and promote Islamic values within their lives. The program is divided into three (3) semesters: Fall, Spring and Summer.

The Fall semester began Saturday September 18. REGISTRATION IS STILL OPEN. This workshop offers a great opportunity to instill in junior youth a strong Islamic identity by creating and enhancing their talents within the IEC community and in other Islamic settings. Applications for the Fall Semester 2010 are available. Please click here for the online registration form. Please click here for the brochure.

### Tuition (Fall Semester 2010)

- Regular tuition: \$50.00
- IEC Sunday School/ Al-Hadi School students: \$35.00
- Other Sunday School students: \$45.00

For any questions, concerns or suggestions, please email: [director.youth@iec-houston.org](mailto:director.youth@iec-houston.org).

## Classifieds

### Apartment Sublease

Apartment for rent within 1 mile of IEC. Rent is \$638/mo. Sub-lease is thru 05/31/11. For details, please contact 713-839-6118.

### School and Medical Uniforms

10% Off Embroidery, School Uniforms & Medical Uniforms when you mention this ad at Sand Oak Uniforms & Embroidery, located at Fondren & Westheimer. Call us at 713-789-0356.

## Al-Zahra Committee Announcement

Al-Zahra Committee would like to thank all the volunteers that helped during the month of Ramadhan and at Eid Salaat. We would also like to thank those that helped us collect over \$3,000 for the Pakistan Flood victims.

## Advertise in Wahdat

Interesting in getting exposure for your organization? This newsletter is distributed to over 450 households. Costs start from \$10 dollars an issue. Discounts are available for committing to 3 or more issues. Email [wahdat@iec-houston.org](mailto:wahdat@iec-houston.org) or call 713.539.8846.





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