

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

A couple of different items this week. On page 3 a timeline of the Al Aqsa Intifada, as it has developed since September 2000. This is a project I have been working on for some time, and it seems appropriate to include it here, as negotiations proceed for some kind of agreement between the PNA and Israel. I hope the 1-page format is not too dense.

Also, the result of some of my recent reading, some notes from research documenting the Arab world's failings in the educational realm. Written by Arabs scholars, with the UN's help, some of the comments seem perceptive.

Email your responses to pkclark@pmbx.net & check the web for back issues.

Culture

The Arab Human Development Report 2003 is a document produced with the support of the United Nations, in which Arab intellectuals consider how to bring education in the Middle East up to a standard in which it can compare with the developed world. (An earlier, 2002, report pursued the need for wider reform in the Arab world, but the 2003 report directly addresses "Building a Knowledge Society.") What follows are some quotes on the impact that religion has had on education in the Arab world.

The relationship between religion and knowledge is closely linked to the concept of the essence of religion and its comprehensive attitude towards worldly life, and between life on earth and the afterlife. The recurring focus is on the importance of enquiry, contemplation, science and sound reasoning, and whatever relates to the continuity of humankind on earth... (p119)

Historically, some Muslims drifted from this innate balance by interpreting the principles of science and reason in the light of "Religious Science" and forms of knowledge useful for religion. By limiting and narrowing the concept of science in this way, they did not advance the openness of the intellectual and natural sciences. Other Muslim groups believed that worldly life, being transient, had no claim on their attention and so pursued the afterlife on earth. They turned to the life of asceticism and Sufism, abandoning worldly science and sound reasoning, and whatever diminished the influence of worldly sciences and the pursuit of material and intellectual knowledge and science... (p119)

It is important to reiterate here that Islam is a system of religion and worldly life at the same time. It is difficult to separate surgically the "political" from other transactions among people in Islamic teaching. Moreover, the prevailing Islamic sect in Arab countries has neither a clergy nor a defined church or religious authority. Hence the separation of church and state is not an issue. What qualifies an individual to have a say in religious affairs is his or her knowledge, and not an affiliation with a religious institution. Authority in worldly affairs is civil, based on people's selection of a ruler from among several candidates.

Nevertheless, the collusion between some repressive regimes and certain types of conservative religious scholars has resulted in certain interpretations of Islam that serve the interests of those regimes. Such interpretations represent serious impediments to human development, particularly when it comes to freedom of thought, accountability of the ruling authorities and women's participation in public life. Furthermore, suppressing political action in many Arab countries has driven some "Islamic" movements underground and pushed others to work under an Islamic cover. In the absence of peaceful and effective political channels for dealing with injustices in the Arab world, at the country, regional and global levels, some political movements identifying themselves as Islamic have adopted extreme interpretations of Islam and violence as means of political activism. They have advocated belligerence towards both other political forces in Arab countries and "the Other", particularly the West as relations have grown more tense, accusing both of being the enemies of Islam itself. Not only are such interpretations inconsistent with pure religion; they also divide societies, taking them further away from the requirements of the knowledge society. (p120)

Three fundamental conditions need to be fulfilled so that religion can take its proper place in the Arab knowledge model and become an effective force for knowledge. The first is to return to the moral, civilised and humane vision that stands behind the essential objectives of Islam. The second is to free religion from the sway of politics and to free religious institutions from political authorities, governments and radical religious movements. The third is to acknowledge intellectual freedom by reviving scholarship (ijtihad) and the protection of the right to differ (p121).

Obviously, we might not entirely agree with the line of thought, but as I was studying the AHDR-2003 this month I though some of the comments shed useful light on Arab society, and the impact of religion on thought.

The Seventh Crusade

Louis IX of France began an independent Crusade in 1248 which would keep him in Egypt for six years. Egypt was important to him as a staging point from which he could supply his troops as they advanced on Jerusalem.

They occupied Damietta (see issue 35 for map) on June 6, 1249, as the Egyptians retreated up the Nile. An attack on Al Mansourah failed, and the Crusader commander, Robert of Artois was killed in the fight. Simultaneously, Louis was attacked by the Mamluk leader, Baibars. The Mamelukes were a military force of slaves, trained to defend Egypt by the Fatimids and Ayyubids. Louis was unfortunate to meet the man who

would play a major role in removing the last traces of the Crusaders from the Holy Land. Instead of withdrawing to Damietta, Louis maintained a siege of Al Mansourah for several months – his Crusaders suffered more than the residents –

until he finally withdrew in March 1250. he was taken captive by Baibars as he retreated north, and held until a ransom of 400,00 livres was paid in May. He then returned to Acre, the Mameluke revolt against the Ayyubids occurring even as Louis sailed north.

While there Louis made an alliance with the Mamelukes, and also sought to negotiate with the Mongols, an emergent power at the time, to form an alliance against the Muslims, but this failed, and he returned to France in 1254.



Louis IX, the only French monarch ever to be made a saint.

History of Islam

Conquest of Mecca

In A.D.628, after the final battle with Abu Sufyan, a peace treaty was made between Mecca and Medina. When this treaty was breached, a year later, Muhammad led an army of 10,000 to Mecca, which entered the city almost unopposed. Apart from removing all signs of idolatry from the Kaabah the Muslims then pardoned the whole city of Mecca, even rewarding them for their submitting.

Muhammad led his first annual pilgrimage to Mecca in 632. Three months later, at the age of 63, he died.

Once Mecca had surrendered most of the rest of the peninsula voluntarily submitted to Muhammad, with the remainder doing so after being defeated by Muslim armies. Various Christian and Jewish tribes were able to retain their faith on payment of tribute and taxes, but this privilege was not granted to the pagan tribes.

We have considered the establishment of Islam, beginning with the period of the life of Muhammad. In the next issue we shall look at the writings of Islam, and various aspects of the religion that make the Muslim world what it is today.

Muhammad

Visions and Revelations

The Message

In Medina

Conquest of Mecca

The Qur'an

The Hadith

Teachings of Islam

Traditions of Islam

Practices of Islam

(Much of this information was obtained from: Answering Islam, Geisler & Saleeb, 2002)



A satellite image of the Nile Delta shows the difference between the irrigated land and the surrounding desert.

The Al Aqsa Intifada

2000	S	28	SHARON at Temple Mount (Al Aqsa)	16 - Mitchell Commission - visits Mid-East - Draft Rpt. - Full
		30	Muhammad Ad Durra killed	
	O	7	Summit at Sharm alSheikh (w/CLINTON)	
2001		12	2 Israeli soldiers killed/mutilated	Jenn assault
	N	20	School bus attacked, 2 die	
	D	21	Gaza bombardment	
	J	21	(-28) Taba Summit	
			Trenches dug around Jericho begin	
	F	6	BARAK loses election to Ariel SHARON	
		14	8 killed by bus driver	
	M		First targeted assassinations	
			Villages under curfew	
		9	SHARON takes office	
2002		27	Amman Arab Summit	Siege of Ramallah
		28	Bomb kills 2	
	A	14	2 bombs in Jerusalem	
		17	US/France protest settlement growth	
		17	Shelling from Gaza	
		18	Gaza incursion	
		23	Bus bomb-2 die	
	M			
		18	First use of warplanes	
	J	1	Tel Aviv disco suicide bomb (21 die)	
2003	J	10	14 homes demolished	Ch. of Nativity
	A	4	Orient House seized	
		9	Jerusalem suicide bomb - 15 die	
		14	Jenin raided	
		29	Beit Jala occupied	
	S		IDF raids Palestinian police stations	
		10	Series of bombs	
		11	WORLD TRADE CENTER	
		12	(-19) Jenin incursion	
		19	Ceasefire attempt	
2004	O	7	Air attacks against Taleban	Siege of Ramallah
		10	Palestinians riot against PNA	
		17	Israeli tourism minister killed	
		20	6 towns occupied	
	N	20	POWELL criticizes settlement growth	
		23	Israel assassinates Hamas leader	
		26	Gen. Zinni visits	
	D	2	Haifa/Jerusalem bombs - 25 die	
		13	Arafat confined to Ramallah HQ	
		22	Palestinian police kill 5 militants	
2005	J	3	Ship with 50 tons of arms caught	Ch. of Nativity
		28	Jenin assaulted	
		28	Female suicide bomber kills 1	
	F	1	Saudi peace proposal	
		1	200+ IDF troops refuse to serve	
	M	3	16 die in West Bank bombs	
		9	Jerusalem cafe bomb, 11 die	
		9	IDF raid-50 die	
		14	UNSCR 1397 proposes Pal. State	
		20	2 bus bombings - 10 die	
2006		27	Suicide bomb at Seder kills 29	Ch. of Nativity
		29	Op. Defensive Shield (8 town curfew)	
		31	Haifa bomb kills Arabs & Jews	
	A	2	Church of Nativity siege	
	M	8	Tel Aviv pool hall bomb kills 15	
		14	Arafat pledges reform of PNA	
		17	Jenin incursion	

2002	J	5	Megiddo bus bomb	Siege
		7	ARAFAT HQ surrounded	
		16	Security barrier begins	
		18	(& 19th) Bus bombs -26 die	
		25	IDF Battle militants in Hebron	
	J	12	Israeli/Palestinian peace talks	
		17	Suicide bomb in bus, 11 die	
		19	Home demolition	
		22	Assassination F-16 (11 children die)	
		31	Hebrew University bomb, 7 die	
2003	A	2	Nablus raid, Gaza demolitions	
		4	Bus bomb in north, 10 die	
	S	3	Isr. Court limits deportations	
		12	PNA cabinet resigns	
		18	Suicide bomber kills policeman	
		19	Tel Aviv bus bomb kills 6	
		20	(-30th) 3rd siege of Palestinian HQ	
	O	20	Settlers resist outpost removal	
		21	Car bomb kills 14 on bus	
		23	'Road Map' outlined	
2004		27	Suicide bomb in Ariel kills 3	
		29	New Palestinian cabinet approved	
	N	10	Kibbutz raid kills 5 (2 babies)	
		13	Tulkarm reprisal raid	
		15	12 Israelis shot in Hebron	
		21	Jerusalem bus bomb kills 11	
	D	20	Road Map delay (Israeli elections)	
	J	2	IDF shoots 3 near settlement	
		6	Suicide bomb kills 19 in Tel Aviv	
		21	Market destroyed by Israel	
2005		26	3 Israelis shot near Hebron	
		29	Ariel SHARON re-elected	
	F	19	Nablus/Gaza IDF raids kill 13	
		22	Hamas "No" to PLO truce	
		23	11 more die in Gaza raid	
	M	4	Home demolition kills mother	
		5	Haifa bus bomb kills 15	
		7	Incursion, after rockets fired from Gaza	
		9	Road Map delayed (due to Iraq war)	
		16	Bulldozer kills US activist	
2006		20	Abbas to become Palestinian P.M.	
	A	8	F-16 rocket kills 7 (inc. 3 Hamas)	
		8	Arafat resists cabinet changes	
		30	Road Map published	
	M	18	Sharon/Abbas meet over Road Map	
	J	4	Aqaba Peace Conference	
		6	Hamas refuses talks with ABBAS	
		11	Bus bomber disguised as Jew kills 17	
		18	Jerusalem bus bomb kills 19	
		19	West Bank towns occupied	
2007		29	Militant groups agree ceasefire	
	J	1	IDF pulls out of Bethlehem	
	A	19	Jerusalem bus bomber kills 21	
		20	Targeted assassination of Hamas leader	
		21	Ceasefire (Hudna) abandoned	
	S	6	PM Abbas resigns, Qurei appointed (9)	
		9	Bombs in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem	
		13	Haifa suicide bomb kills 19	
	O	13	Geneva Accord proposed	
		15	US convoy ambushed in Gaza	
2008		21	UN resolution calls for halt to barrier	
	N	12	QUREI cabinet sworn in	
		18	EU condemns Barrier	
	D	1	Geneva Accord published	
		22	Egyptian F.M. attacked at Al Aqsa	

2004	J	2	Joint Isr./Pal. protests over Barrier	Disengagement plan - to retain 6 W.B. towns - rejected by Likud
		13	Woman suicide bomber kills 4	
		29	Jerusalem bus bomber kills 10	
	F	2	Disengagement plan launched	
		22	Jerusalem bus bomb kills 8	
	M	6	6 Pals. die in failed attack	
		14	Suicide bombs in Ashdod kill 10	
		22	Sheikh Yassin of Hamas assassinated	
	A			
		17	Hamas' Abdel Rantissi assassinated	
2005		20	IDF respond to Gaza rockets, 10 die	
	M	13	13 IDF killed by Gaza militants	
		18	Op. Rainbow, against Gaza tunnels	
			40 killed in 9-day Gaza incursion	
		20	Marwan Barghouti convicted of murder	
	J	4	SHARON expels Gaza plan opponents	
		15	Ariel Barrier begins, US criticizes it	
	J	1	S. court: Barrier unconstitutional	
		1	US criticizes settlement plans	
		11	Tel Aviv bomb kills 1	
2006		17	QUREI resigns (27th reinstated)	
		18	Gaza riot, PA offices burned	
	A			
		17	SHARON approves 1000 settler homes	
		26	Mortars from Gaza prompt closure	
		31	2 Beersheba bus bombs kill 16	
	S	2	(-11) Gaza incursion	
		11	Knesset votes against Gaza pullout	
		14	Nablus/Jenin raids kill 9 Palestinians	
		26	Knesset approves Gaza withdrawal	
2007		27	Gaza incursion (3 weeks)	
	O	2	Rocket attacks from Gaza, 2 killed	
		3	Incursion into Jabaliya camp, Gaza	
		27	Knesset approves Gaza plan	
		29	ARAFAT to French hospital	
	N	1	16-year old suicide bomber, 3 die	
		11	ARAFAT dies, Abbas to head Fatah	
		15	2-week Jenin campaign ends	
	D	1	Shinui coalition dissolves	
		12	Tunnel bomb kills 4 IDF at border post	
2008		14	ABBAS calls for end to violence	
		17	2-day push into Khan Younis	
		31	Warplane missiles kill 2 in Khan Younis	
	J	9	ABBAS elected as P.M	
		10	Isr Govt. of National Unity (inc. Labor)	
		14	Gaza sealed as 6 IDF killed	
		15	Mortar barrage from Gaza	
		15	ABBAS inauguration, calls for ceasefire	
		19	Suicide bomb nr Gaza settlement	
		20	Rafah crossing to Egypt opened	
2009		21	PNA police take positions in Gaza	
		24	Militant groups agree to cease attacks	
		30	130,000 protest Gaza withdrawal	
	F	8	Sharm al Sheikh summit	
		11	10 PNA officials fired for corruption	
		23	New PNA cabinet appointed	
		25	Tel Aviv suicide bomb, 5 die	
	M	1	ABBAS at London peace conference	
		16	Jericho returns to PA control	

This Month

Feb	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	MAR	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M		W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	
Africa																														
Turkey																														
Asia																														
Pakistan																														
Afghan.																														
Arabia																														
Iraq																														
Iran																														
Lebanon & Syria																														
Egypt																														
Israel																														
Palestine																														
Feb	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	MAR	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M		W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	