



Reflection: Moroccan Boy Rayan Dies Shortly After Being Rescued From Well

By Yousuf Ali

On Feb. 5, a Moroccan boy by the name of Rayan Oram, aged five, died after being rescued from a well in which he was trapped in for at least four days. The story attracted international attention and was initially a source of hope as Oram was extracted from the well only for this to be dashed as he passed away shortly after.

According to the BBC, the bid to free the boy had gripped the country, with hundreds of people gathered at the well and thousands more following online. The boy plunged 32m (104ft) through the well's narrow opening.



The rescue had been hampered by fears of a landslide. Rescuers finally brought the boy out of the well on Saturday evening. No word had been given at the time

about his condition, and the apparent rescue was initially met with cheers from the crowds.” Despite the initial difficulties, Oram was

extracted from the well only to pass away shortly thereafter, and this attracted national and international attention

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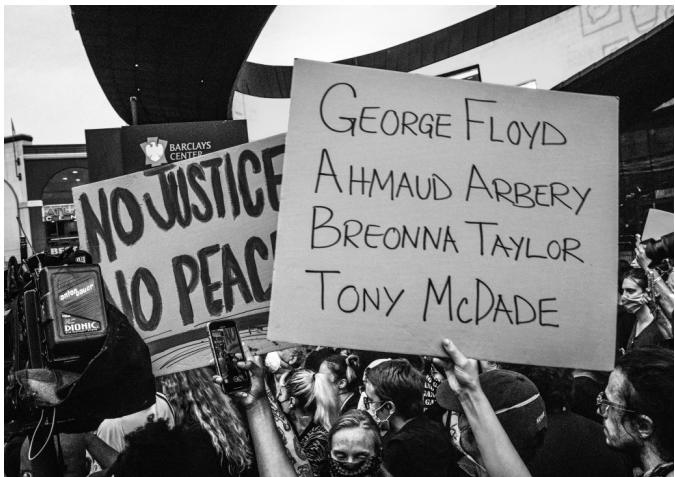
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Ahmaud Arbery’s Killers Plead Not Guilty Of Hate Crimes, Trial To Begin

By: Aysha Qamar

After a plea deal that could have lowered their sentences was rejected, two men who killed Ahmaud Arbery have decided to continue to plead not guilty to a federal hate crime charge in the 2020 killing. The hate crime charges were brought upon in April when a federal grand jury indicted three men, Travis McMichael,



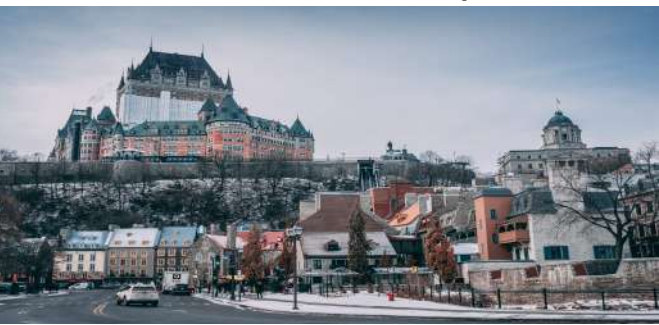
Gregory McMichael, and William “Roddie” Bryan, in a hate crime case that included charges of interference with the victim’s rights and attempted kidnapping, Daily Kos reported.

ated Press, in a motion filed Thursday, Greg McMichael’s defense attorney said McMichael pleads not guilty and plans to stand trial for the second time in Ar-

According to the Associ-

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Canadian Masters Wins Award For Islamophobia Activism In Québec



BY:TMO Staff

Canada has a reputation for being multi-cultural and tolerant of other ways of life and races including Islam, but no place is perfect and throughout the last several years there have been several Islamophobic hate crimes

leading to the deaths of Muslims in addition to countless incidences of harassment. The most prominent example was on January 29, 2017, in which Alexandre Bissonette walked into the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec and killed

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The Durand Border Between Pakistan And Afghanistan



By Mahvish Akhtar

The Pakistani government has been facing turmoil with the new Taliban-led Afghan government in terms of border control and fencing.

There has been a video circulating on the internet showing the Taliban members on the Afghan side destroying a part of the fence that Pakistan has built to create a prominent border at the Durand Line. The Taliban claimed the fencing was done inside Afghanistan's territory.

In another video circulating on Twitter, Afghan Defence Ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Khwarzmi was heard saying that Pakistan had no right to fence the border and create a divide, adding that such a move was "inappropriate and against the law".

Nonetheless when asked about the video and the government's stance on this issue Mr. Khwarzmi commented that "the same nation lived on both sides of the border and it was "logically not appropriate to create a gulf among a nation." However, Pakistani security officials told Pakistan news sources that the Taliban's claim of Pakistani forces trespassing into Afghanistan to build

the border fence is false.

Pakistan said it will continue to have more talks with Afghanistan's administration to settle "some confusions" that have risen from the border fiasco.

Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi said in a news conference in Islamabad that his country was determined to protect its "interests" and continue unilateral fencing Pakistan's almost 1,615-mile-long border with Afghanistan.

"We are not silent. We have installed the fence and, God willing, this effort will continue," Mr. Qureshi emphasized. "Afghanistan is our friendly neighbor. We are engaged with them, as some confusions have emerged, and we shall be able to resolve them through diplomatic channels." While Pakistan is downplaying the whole incident and the issue itself the Afghans are making sure their disapproval of the border and its placement is understood.

Taliban spokesperson and Afghanistan's acting information minister Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement, "The issue of the Durand Line is still an unresolved one,

while the construction of fencing itself creates rifts between a nation spread across both sides of the border. It amounts to dividing a nation."

The fencing project had triggered clashes between Pakistani troops and Afghan security forces of the former US-backed government in Kabul in the past as well. The Durand border has been a disputed issue for a long time between the two countries. This border agreement was signed in 1893 between Afghan King Abdul Rahman and British-India's Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand.

Along with the Afghan Taliban government, the country has to deal with the Pakistan Taliban daily. According to officials, Pakistan Tehreek-Taliban (TTP) has been emboldened by the new Afghan government.

TTP is banned in Pakistan and is known as a terrorist organization. Last week security forces raided its base in the Waziristan area near the Afghanistan border. The group claimed the clashes had killed several Pakistani troops but there weren't any TTP casualties. The government statement said security forces had

captured "one terrorist along with weapons and ammunition," and lost four personnel in an intense exchange of fire that followed the raid.

This organization has a very strong foothold in that area and is recruiting people for their cause. It is difficult to single out people from within civilians and stop the work they are doing. This kind of tactic can be more damaging and problematic for the country than a full-on attack. TTP has perpetrated many deadly attacks on Pakistani soil as well. The deadliest one was in 2014 when 132 school children were killed in an execution-style massacre in a military school.

Many militant organizations had found a home and training grounds in Afghanistan during the time of war, and some of them fought alongside the Taliban that won them their country back. TTP is one of those groups so getting the Afghan Taliban to help settle disputes with TTP would be difficult if not impossible.

The new Afghan government did mediate between TTP and the Pakistani government late last year. A ceasefire was ended a while back. This

time around chances of them getting involved in a way that's positive for Pakistan is unlikely.

Any attempts to negotiate with the TTP recently, have fallen apart. Mr. Rana, a Pakistan Chief Minister says Pakistan's policy of simultaneously negotiating with and attacking the TTP is "confusing" and risks encouraging other insurgents in both countries.

Analysts say that the Afghanistan government would not be helpful in this matter because they cannot turn over leaders from groups that helped them win their country back. This is not just about one organization and a few people, if Afghanistan was to negotiate about TTP they would have to negotiate about IS and Al-Qaida as well and they are all allies of the newly built state.

This causes a crisis for Pakistan because it forces the Pakistani government to negotiate with TTP which is unsettling for multiple friends of the country. These countries are helping Pakistan financially and with trade. Pakistan cannot afford to upset them.



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Hashir Faruqi: A Legendary Muslim Journalist



by Dr. Aslam Abdullah

With the demise of Mohammed Hashir Faruqi, the world not only lost an eminent journalist but a thinker, humanist, and a voice of reason. The 92-year-old frail-looking but giant of a truthful writer left this world from his temporary residence in London on January 11 after paving the way for robust Muslim journalism with his sacrifices and backbreaking work. A legend in his own right, Faruqi founded in 1970 the Impact in London, as "a newspaper to promote a genuine understanding of Islam and Muslims to the English reading audience worldwide.

Against all odds, he worked tirelessly to raise human rights issues, writing against injustices and violations of human dignity, urging Muslims to stand peacefully for the weak and the marginalized people.

With almost no resources, sitting in a dilapidated two-room London office, Faruqi, trained initially as a scientist, worked hours and hours to give voice to a community that was baffled by the negative stereotyped image in the West.

Born in Eastern Uttar Pradesh in January 1930, Faruqi joined the Pakistan Movement and formed a Muslim Student Union at Kanpur Agricultural College to mobilize the youth to cause a new state, ensuring equality and justice for all. He was an entomologist.

In the 1960s, he moved to London and decided to become the voice of the newly arriving Muslim immigrants, initiating starting an English language

newspaper, a project many contemporary Muslims thought was impossible to accomplish in a highly competitive world. It took him ten years to achieve his dream. He was a regular contributor to the weekly meetings of the London Islamic Center. He also contributed a column in the Muslim, the monthly magazine of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies in the UK and EIRE.

During the Iranian Revolution, he was in the news as he was a hostage in the Iranian embassy siege in 1980. People remember his efforts to end the siege peacefully.

In 2003, he was the among Muslims who organized the Prince of Wales visit to Islamic Foundation Markfield and presented a token of appreciation to the Royal visitor on behalf of the community. The Muslim News awarded him the Editor's lifetime achievement award in 2013. Describing his work, Ahmed Versi, editor of the Muslim News, said: "He is our connection from the world we inhabit too now to a Muslim world that began its uncertain journey in the midst of decolonization, war, and new modern identities."

Once launched, Impact became a voice of honest journalism, truth, and fair and balanced reporting. With meager resources and the help of a few dedicated supporters such as Saleem Siddiqi, he proved that dreams could come true on the wings of sincerity and humility. The wages were minimum, the task was huge, but the team under Faruqi burned the midnight oil and worked for late hours,

often neglecting their families to publish the magazine regularly.

The Impact became a source of honest writing in the Muslim world. Newspapers published in India, Pakistan, Turkey, the Middle East, and Africa began borrowing its articles, inspiring younger people to start their English-language publications in their region. Moreover, his writings proved that Muslims could write their own stories and discern between facts and fiction. During his long tenure as Editor-in-chief of the magazine, he trained several Muslim youths in Muslim journalism.

Be fair, bold, and balanced in your writing. Never compromise on facts. Always stand for human dignity. Don't ever yield to propaganda, and serve your God through serving humanity. These were the principles he always advocated to those who sought his advice.

Commenting on his demise, the world-renowned expert on Muslim media, Dr. Ahmadullah Siddiqi, Professor emeritus of Media Studies at Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois, wrote the following. "A person who always inspired me and countless others by his sincerity, hard work, and high-quality journalism."

Syed Ubaidur Rehman, a prominent Indian author who recently compiled a biography of India's Muslim Freedom Fighters, wrote. "He was such a selfless person. His death is a massive loss for the Muslim ummah. Once I walked into

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Biden Nominates First Muslim Woman And First Bangladeshi-American To Serve As Federal Judge



By: TMO Staff

President Joe Biden announced his latest round of judicial nominees on Wednesday. What's so exciting about this? Well, the eight nominees Biden chose in his 13th round were not only majority women, but included a Muslim American woman who if confirmed would be the first Muslim American woman to serve as a federal judge. In addition to being the first Muslim American woman to serve in the position if confirmed, Nusrat Jahan Choudhury would also be the first Bangladeshi American to serve as a federal judge.

"A nominee who would be the first Bangladeshi-American, the first Muslim-American woman, and only the second Muslim-American person to serve as a federal judge," the White House said in a statement on Wednesday, referring to Choudhury.

Choudhury currently serves as the legal director of the Illinois chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). According to Al Jazeera, she has worked on numerous civil rights cases, including lawsuits challenging the federal

government's No Fly List and the New York Police Department's surveillance of the city's Muslim community.

While the organization does not formally endorse judicial or political nominees, the ACLU of Illinois described Choudhury's nomination as "historic."

"During her tenure as legal director in Illinois, [Choudhury] has among other things led our legal team in efforts to improve policing in Chicago, protect medically-vulnerable persons detained on immigration charges during the COVID pandemic in Illinois county jails, and challenged unfair practices that drive Chicago residents into bankruptcy to pay fines and fees," ACLU of Illinois Executive Director Colleen Connell said in a statement.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer formally recommended Choudhury to serve on the federal bench in New York in September 2021, calling her an "expert in civil rights and liberties." Her nomination was backed by various Muslim advocacy groups in addition to New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand.

Muslim Advocates also thanked Biden for "making this historic nomination happen".

"At a time when inequalities in the justice system are front and center, Choudhury, who dedicated her career to protecting the civil rights of Muslims and other marginalized communities, would bring legitimacy to the judiciary by pushing it towards justice," Muslim Advocates said in a statement.

"And at a time when hate and division are driving us apart, Choudhury would serve as an inspiration as the first Muslim woman, first Bangladeshi-American and second ever Ameri-

can Muslim to serve as a Senate-confirmed federal judge."

Choudhury's nomination follows the Senate's confirmation of Zaid Quraishi, the first Muslim to be confirmed as a federal judge in U.S. history. Quraishi serves as a U.S. district judge for New Jersey. Confirmed in June 2021, he was nominated by Biden in March 2021 and is Biden's third confirmed judicial nominee, Daily Kos reported.

Biden has announced 83 federal judiciary nominees since being sworn in as president. According to NPR, in addition to Quraishi, more than 40 new judges have been confirmed by the Senate,

including the first openly LGBTQ+ woman to sit on a federal appeals court: Beth Robinson of Vermont.

Biden's nominees have proven to be some of the most diverse in U.S. history, with 24 identifying as Black, 17 as Hispanic, and 16 as part of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, USA TODAY reported.

May we continue to see our country's leadership diversify. Congratulations Choudhury, we look forward to seeing you confirmed!



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Civic Engagement By An Historic City Council

By: Saeed Khan

Hamtramck is not only one of the most ethnically diverse parts of the Metro Detroit area; it is arguably one of the most diverse cities in the United States on a per capita basis. With a population of roughly 22,000, Hamtramck has attained a reputation of being a thriving immigrant destination since it was a thriving Polish enclave for decades. Today, there are new waves of Eastern Europeans, including Bosnians and Ukrainians, along with large African-American, Yemeni and Bangladeshi communities. In fact, Hamtramck is home to Banglatown, a neighborhood that reflects the cultural vibrancy of the area.

The city of Hamtramck can now lay claim to new recognition. Last month, it inaugurated the country's first, and only, all-Muslim city council. Led by Yemeni-American Amer Ghalib, the first non-Polish-American



mayor in the city's history, the new City Council is comprised of Yemeni and Bangladeshi immigrants, including Adam Albarmaki, Khalil Refai, Mohammed Alsomiri, Nayeem Choudhury and Mohammed Hassan, as well as Amanda Jaczkowski, an American-born convert to Islam whose Polish family migrated to the area in the 1800s. In keeping with the precedent-setting nature of its achievement, the

Hamtramck City Council also took action to add its voice to a political climate that has become shockingly toxic of late, especially with so many politicians targeting vulnerable minority communities for sport, as well as financial and electoral gain. On the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is held on January 27, the City Council passed a resolution condemning antisemitism. With the rise of Islamophobia and

anti-Jewish hatred in the United States and worldwide, this resolution demonstrated a show of solidarity by an all-Muslim city council with their Jewish brethren that antisemitism is not welcome and will not be tolerated in Hamtramck. The local Jewish community expressed its gratitude at the City Council's gesture, with Rabbi Asher Lopatin, Executive Director of the Detroit chapter of the Jewish Community Relations

Council/American Jewish Committee (JCRC/AJC) paying the Council a visit in Hamtramck to give thanks personally for the Council's enactment, noting with appreciation that while oftentimes, Jewish organizations make such requests for resolutions from government entities, Hamtramck was proactive in issuing the resolution without prompt or obligation.

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Calls To Remove Michigan Judge Alexis Krot, Who Chastised Cancer Patient, Increase

By: TMO Staff

In a statement posted to the court's website Tuesday, Krot apologized for her behavior during Chowdhury's hearing.

"I made a mistake. I acted intemperately. I'm very embarrassed that I did so," she said in the statement. "I apologize to the person who appeared before me and to our entire community for having failed to meet the high standards that we expect of our judicial officers, and that I expect of myself."

Additionally, she noted that she self-reported her behavior to the Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission.

A petition has been signed by over 211,000 people to remove a Michigan judge who chastised a cancer patient, Burhan Chowdhury, over his unkempt lawn. The court exchange video of the judge surfaced on social media and left many angry over Krot's words towards an elderly cancer patient.

In the video, 72-year-old Chowdhury, who has



been battling cancer for more than three years, can be seen struggling to breathe. As he explains to the judge that he was "very weak" and unable to groom the grass that had overtaken his property over the summer, she proceeds to yell and threaten him.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," Krot can be heard saying to Chowdhury in the viral video. "If I could give you jail time on this, I would."

The video quickly went viral with concerns on how Krot treated Chow-

dhury, who was clearly distressed during the ordeal. Krot referenced concerns from neighbors and dismissed Chowdhury's pleas that he was helpless at the time.

"The way she said that my father should serve jail time for this thing really bugged me," Chowdhury's son, Shibbir Chowdhury, told The Washington Post. "I was really shocked by it. I didn't expect her to yell at us in this kind of a situation."

The family faced challenges in maintaining

the yard when Shibbir, who usually helped with cleaning it, traveled to Bangladesh for three months last year. The Washington Post reported. Although the family had cleaned up the property area upon his return, Chowdhury was required to make a court appearance to see whether he would have to pay a fine.

Legislators across the country spoke up in regards to the incident, including local officials. Michigan Rep. Abraham Aiyash condemned Krot's

behavior as an elected official, at the Hamtramck City Council on Jan.11.

"When our elected officials act with disrespect, regardless of what the situation might be, when our elected officials are insulting members of the community that they were elected to serve, we have enough," the lawmaker said, the Detroit Free Press reported. "We have a responsibility to step up and call it out."

Rep. Aiyash, who will be filling a complaint, was interrupted by cheers from the audience as he "echoed the sentiments of residents in Hamtramck" according to the Detroit Free Press.

"What's shameful is her complete disregard for his conditions. Completely unacceptable," an Instagram commenter wrote.

Judge Krot was first appointed to the Hamtramck 31st District Court in 2016 by then-Governor Rick Snyder. Krot was reelected in 2020 after running unopposed.

February 1, 2022 Recognized As World Hijab Day

by APIA Vote - MI

On January 27, a resolution to recognize World Hijab Day in Michigan was passed as a result of the hard work put in by APIA Vote-MI, community members and legislator Senator Stephanie Chang. Executive Director, Rebeka Islam worked with Michigan Senator Chang to bring the resolution forward.

"It was an honor to recognize APIA Vote-MI Director Rebeka Islam, her family and a group of visitors who accompanied her to Lansing for the World Hijab Day resolution introduced by my co-chair of the APA Caucus, Senator Chang, and even nicer to visit with them in the House gallery," says Rep. Padma Kuppa

In step with New York City's tenth year of honoring this day, the Michigan Senate proclaims February 1 as World Hijab Day. We, the people of Michigan, shall come



together on February 1, 2022 to recognize a day of solidarity with, and respect for, our Muslim sisters.

The Hijab is a traditional veil which covers a woman's hair and chest, signifying the sacredness of and respect for women's bodies, as well as respect for religious faith.

This day of unity was created by Nazma Khan,

meant to encourage non-Muslim women to embrace the Hijab and promote religious tolerance, cultural competency and solidarity on an international level.

We are invited to share in this religious practice to show support for our community of Muslim women, and create long-lasting connections that combat prejudice. Wearing the Hijab is a

choice, a freedom, and a blessing—a message that leaders in the American Muslim community have tirelessly worked to convey.

We believe it is one of America's greatest strengths to embrace different cultures and faiths, allowing citizens to freely express themselves. It is our hope that our community comes together on February 1

and embraces the Hijab as this symbol of unity and strength.

"This is a day to recognize the millions of Muslim women around the world who choose to wear the Hijab and live a life of modesty. It's also an open invitation to women of all walks of life to wear a Hijab and stand in solidarity with Muslim women," says Sen. Stephanie Chang.

Culture and faith is meant to be shared, to educate each other and understand one another. World Hijab Day calls for a universal understanding of Islamic faith and practices, and to develop a stronger communal bond within our society.

APIA Vote-MI and several Michigan legislators will be joining organizations and activists throughout the world during a virtual celebration on February 1, 2022, to celebrate World Hijab Day.

‘The Legacy Continues’: Miftaah Institute Hosts Event With UFC Lightweight Champion Khabib Nurmagomedov

By: Zain Ahmed

“The Legacy Continues”, was a memorable event hosted by Miftaah Institute with UFC Lightweight Champion Khabib Nurmagomedov, The Eagle, on Jan. 25. During the interview session at Miftaah Campus in Warren Michigan Nurmagomedov and members of the Miftaah Institute discussed a variety of topics. Over a thousand people were in attendance and able to learn about Nurmagomedov’s life before, during, and after his UFC days.

One of the main topics discussed in this session was Khabib’s upbringing in Dagestan, Russia. He spoke to listeners about the lifestyle, conditions, and uniqueness of living in his village of Sidi. He also discussed the impact his father had on him and how that has shaped him into the person he is today.

Nurmagomedov’s father had a major influence on his career, up until his death in 2020. This led the Eagle to retire after his fight against Justin Gaethje. The Eagle also mentions how his father always kept him busy growing up, and how that has stayed with him after retiring.

“When I grew up, my father always make me do something, it never was like sitting and just like how they like to say, like just chilling. Even now, like I’m 33 years old and I’m finished with my professional career but I never sit and live in one city,” Nurmagomedov said.

Alongside discussing the influence his father had on him, Nurmagomedov discussed parenting, the difference in lifestyle between his village in Dagestan, and the rest of the world, and how it made him a tougher person.

Another important topic discussed was how Nurmagomedov has been able to represent Islam in a positive manner throughout his time in the UFC. He has also continued to make a beneficial impact post-re-



tirement. He emphasized leading by example and

representing Islamic values through words and

action.

Throughout the event,

Nurmagomedov commented on many of his experiences in the UFC. He also shared some information on some of his memorable fights, including his matchups against Conor McGregor, Dustin Poirer, and Justin Gaethje. He described the meaning beyond some of his iconic sayings and actions, as well as his thought process during some of these nights.

Overall, the event gave many a new insight into Nurmagomedov’s legacy by including an engaging and successful interview with Miftaah Institute. With a mixture of life lessons, Islamic advice, experiences, and comedy,

“The Legacy Continues” was an enjoyable experience for everyone.

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Op Ed: A Muslim Perspective On A Trip To Spain

By: Nida Imam

With the start of this new year, I feel compelled to gleefully reminisce on an international trip that I took last year. This past fall, I had the opportunity to travel to Spain. I had been planning this trip since the first day of my seventh-grade Spanish class. What had captured my obsession was not only learning the language, but also the Islamic history associated with the region.

My 12-day trip was definitely worth the wait and allure, and I was fortunate enough to not only have a good time but also extraordinary stories to share from the perspective of a Muslim.

My trip started in my residence state of Indiana as I took my 30-minute flight to good old Chicago O'Hare airport. Due to the limited halal and zabiha meal options, my husband and I ate our not-so Chicago-style cheese pizza slices while waiting at the gate for the international Iberia Airlines flight to Spain.

We neurotically checked to make sure we had our vaccination cards and QR codes. The QR code was a travel requirement set by Spain's Ministry of Health, necessitating completion via the mobile application, SpTH. We had answered the

COVID-related and travel plan questions as well as uploaded photos of our passport and vaccination cards to the application. We were all set and ready for this trip, but it would be amiss not to mention that the paranoia of traveling during the pandemic crept up intermittently during the trip.

During the flight, we were able to select "Halal Meal" for our dietary preferences. The food we received was mainly vegetarian or fish. I have had worse, so I was not complaining. When I reached Barcelona, I certainly was not complaining at all.

The Spanish immigration was a breeze. With a new stamp on my passport and a quick bus ride to the city center, I finally was welcomed to the real breeze. That is the cool breeze from the Mediterranean. This breeze, along with the heat on my face from the bright Catalan sun, was a blessing indeed and I could not stop grinning. Before you judge me, I must remind you that I was coming from a very cold and rainy Midwestern state during that time of the year.

I was finally here! I had waited a decade for this

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**Cont. from page 8.
Trip To Spain.**

trip. I was ready to use my rusty Spanish. I was confident that the Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish class I took in high school was going to come to some good use!

However, right from the get-go, I received my first surprise: in Barcelona, the language that actually was most helpful in knowing when communicating with shopkeepers and restaurant staff was by far Urdu!

Every shop we visited in downtown Barcelona had either a South Asian worker or owner. Speaking in Urdu brought a smile to both their faces and ours. One of the Pakistani shop owners told me how he really liked it in Barcelona. "Karachi jaisa mausam hai yahan" (The weather is similar to Karachi) he told me gleefully.

I could not help but search the Internet about the South Asian presence in Spain during the trip. I found a couple of good reads such as a case study on Indian Migration to the region and a Pakistani article in Dawn newspaper- the newspaper I have grown up watching my father read- about the increase of Pakistanis present in Barcelona.

Our stay in Barcelona was about three days and it was definitely not enough. In order to get an authentic experience of the city, we decided to take the bus and metro everywhere in Barcelona. We were indeed pleased by the punctuality of public transportation there. Now and then the metro was a little more packed than we would prefer due to our COVID paranoia, however coming from the US, let alone a red state, we were right away surprised by how well everyone was keeping up with wearing masks. A lot of people were wearing them even outdoors! I was astonished, to say the least.

Another way we made sure we could maximize our experience in Barcelona was by staying close to the well-known La Rambla, a street in Barcelona that divides Barri

Gòtic (the Gothic Quarter) from other neighborhoods of Barcelona.

I was astonished by the unique and colorful architecture existing in the city. The renowned Spanish architect, Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926), influenced and contributed to a lot of it. Gaudí's Parc Güell is a must-see to experience the 20th century's Catalan modernism movement style. Gaudí's work is known for its use of a range of textures while incorporating colorful mosaics.

We also visited his most famous accomplishment and design, La Sagrada Família, a beautiful church that he was not able to complete. But the construction of Sagrada Família went on past his death and is still under construction inspired by his plans and vision. The construction for the church has been in construction for more than 135 years and is anticipated to be completed by 2026, which may be further delayed due to-yes you guessed it- COVID.

Besides the architecture in the city, we were able to enjoy the relaxed seaside ambiance of La Barceloneta district, not to be confused with Barceloneta Miami, the Spanish-inspired neighborhood in Miami. La Barceloneta is a neighborhood very close to the Gothic Quarter and has some amazing views of the Mediterranean Sea. I was able to meet a handful of hijabis who I helped with their pictures, and they returned the favor.

Last but certainly not least, we tried some great food as well. I would surely tell everyone I know who goes to Barcelona to try the Burger Maker's halal burgers. They were one of the best burgers I have ever had- and that's coming from someone who has tried some really amazing halal burgers in Dearborn, Michigan.

With the power of the Internet, we were able to find many halal options. I wondered if the plenty of halal food options available probably had to do something with the growing South Asian population.



Many of the restaurant owners and workers we met were Muslims and recent immigrants. It is worth mentioning that Catalonia, the region in which Barcelona is located, is where the main Muslim population

resides today in Spain.

With our stay in Barcelona coming to an end, I braced myself for the road ahead. Our plan was to travel south and west with stops in Segovia, Madrid, Toledo,

Córdoba, Seville, Ronda, Marbella, Málaga and Granada (home of the Alhambra Palace).

(To be Continued to March, 2022 edition)

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Amnesty International Declares Israel An Apartheid State

by Dr. Aslam Abdullah

Amnesty International declared Israel an apartheid state, a fact Palestinians had long believed.

In its 300 page report that systematically analyzed institutionalized discrimination committed by Israel against Palestinian refugees, the world's most prestigious human rights organization concluded that Israel was guilty of the crime of apartheid.

The report begins with a quote from the former Israeli Prime Minister saying in a March 2019 statement that "Israel is not a state of all its citizens... [but rather] the nation-state of the Jewish people and only them." Under international and human law, describe such a statement as racist.

Israeli laws, policies, and practices against the Palestinian people violate international human rights law, the Apartheid Convention, and the Rome Statute. Apartheid

constitutes the creation and maintenance of a system or regime of oppression and domination by one racial group over another. Israel systematically pursues a policy of discrimination against a race, Amnesty reported. All the rules of Israel are for the benefit of Jewish Israelis – a system of apartheid.

The report concludes the following:

Israel considers and treats Palestinians as an inferior non-Jewish racial group.

Israel pursues segregation systematically and highly institutionalized through laws, policies, and practices to prevent Palestinians from claiming and enjoying equal rights with Jewish Israelis.

Israel oppresses and dominates the Palestinian people.

It negates the rights of Palestinian refugees residing outside Israel and the OPT to return to their homes.

Israel segments the Palestinians into different geographical areas and divides them differently.

It prevents the Palestinians from exercising their fundamental human rights.

The legal fragmentation of the Palestinian population serves as a foundational element of the regime of oppression and domination of Palestinians.

Israel denies the possibility of realizing equality within Israel and the OPT.

Israel denies nationality and residence, family life and places severe restrictions on freedom of movement.

Israel violates their social and economic rights, including access to housing, adequate living standards, livelihoods, work, healthcare, food security, water and sanitation, and education.

The report concludes that Israel's institutionalized segregation and discrimination system

against Palestinians amounts to a method of apartheid and a severe violation of Israel's human rights.

Amnesty asserts that all of Israel's civilian administration and military authorities and governmental and quasi-governmental institutions enforce a system of apartheid against Palestinians.

Amnesty believes that Israel continues to perpetrate widespread and systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian population against a backdrop of decades of state-sponsored discrimination, segregation, and persecution.

Amnesty report documents inhumane acts, serious human rights violations, and crimes committed against the Palestinian population under international law. It examines specifically the brutal actions of forcible transfer, administrative detention and torture, unlawful killings and serious injuries,

and the denial of fundamental freedoms or persecution committed against the Palestinian population in Israel and the OPT.

Amnesty concludes that the apartheid state of Israel commits these violations intending to maintain this system and amount to the crime against humanity of apartheid under both the Apartheid Convention and the Rome Statute.

The report recommends actions at several levels. However, the most conclusive and practical recommendation is for businesses and nations having trade relations with Israel. Next, it recommends adequate procedures and codes of conduct following international standards to ensure that you do not promote apartheid. Finally, it suggests ceasing such ties if apartheid continues to unleash its crimes.

Aslam Abdullah is a resident scholar at Islamicity.org

Federal Judge Rejects Plea Deal For Men Who Killed Ahmaud Arbery; Hate Crime Charges Stand

by Aysha Qamar

A plea agreement that could have disposed of charges pending in a hate crimes trial for two men convicted of murdering Ahmaud Arbery was rejected by a federal judge Monday, Jan. 31. The deal was reached between prosecutors and two of the three men convicted for killing Arbery a week before their hate crimes trial. During the pretrial on Jan. 31, a federal judge said she would consider the plea deals for father and son, Travis and Gregory McMichael; she rejected them hours later.

According to the Associated Press, when rejecting the deal, U.S. District Judge Lisa Godbey Wood noted that it would have locked her into specific terms, including being able to sentence the men to no more than 30 years in federal prison.

She added that in this

case, it was most appropriate to consider the victim's family's wishes at sentencing, which the proposed deal wouldn't allow. Arbery's parents, Wanda Cooper-Jones and Marcus Arbery, immediately denounced the plea deal and both asked the judge to reject the deal once it was filed.

"I'm asking on the behalf of his family, on behalf of his memory, and on behalf of fairness that you do not grant this plea in order to allow these men to transfer out of Georgia state custody into the federal prisons where they prefer to be," Cooper-Jones, Arbery's mother, told the judge.

The proposed plea agreements were filed with the court on Sunday, according to The Washington Post. No mention of the third defendant William "Roddie" Bryan was made. All three men were sentenced to life in prison on Jan. 7, in

addition to facing federal hate crime charges that were to be sentenced in a federal trial beginning Feb. 7.

The hate crime charges were brought upon in April when a federal grand jury indicted the three men in a hate crime case that included charges of interference with the victims' rights and attempted kidnapping, Daily Kos reported.

According to The New York Times, federal prosecutors offered the plea under the argument that the McMichaels did not set out to hurt a Black person that day, but instead made racist assumptions based on Arbery's skin color. Clearly, the McMichaels are racists—evidence in the trial proved this—but prosecutors claimed that their intention was not to hurt Arbery.

While specific details about the plea deals

were not included in the court filings, Marcus Arbery noted that the plea would have allowed the two killers to spend the first 30 years of their sentences in federal prison as opposed to the state.

"Ahmaud is a kid you cannot replace," he told reporters outside the courtroom during a press conference. "He was killed racially and we want 100% justice, not no half-justice."

Cooper-Jones called the plea disrespectful.

"I fought so hard to get these guys in the state prison," she said. "I told them very, very adamantly that I wanted them to go to state prison and do their time. ... Then I got up this morning and found out they had accepted this ridiculous plea."

Marcus Arbery called for "100% justice" for

his son, adding: "I don't want no chance to make their lives easier." If the men are convicted in the federal hate crimes trial, they face additional life sentences. Travis McMichael would also face weapons charges.

Cooper-Jones has been consistent in her want for a federal trial to take place in order for self-defense arguments to end.

At this time, it is unclear what evidence might be introduced in the federal trial; however, various social media posts and text messages have shown racist language and slurs used online by the McMichaels. The judge has given both the McMichaels until Friday to decide whether they will move ahead with pleading guilty.

Five Years On, Quebec Mosque Attack Still Haunts Muslim Community

By Jillian Kesler-D'Amours

The following was republished from Al Jazeera

Quebec City, Canada – Mohamed Labidi stops under the archway, his feet on the edge of the rich red carpet that extends across the main prayer room of the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre. “He didn’t cross this line,” says Labidi. “He always fired from here.”

Labidi was not at the mosque when a gunman shot into this room from the exact spot where the Muslim community leader is now standing. But he knows where worshippers took cover, where survivors were injured, and where victims were fatally gunned down. The date it all happened – January 29, 2017 – remains etched in his mind.

“That’s the spot where people were hiding,” Labidi tells Al Jazeera, pointing to the mihrab, an enclave used by the imam to lead prayers. “Brother Hassane, he fell here,” he says, walking across the room, before pausing at another corner: “Brother Thabti, he fell near that post.”

Alexandre Bissonnette’s deadly rampage inside Quebec City’s largest mosque lasted less than two minutes. But by the time he finished firing dozens of rounds into the house of worship, six men were dead, five others were seriously injured, and the city’s tight-knit Muslim community found itself at the forefront of a national debate around hate-fuelled violence.

“All that,” says Labidi, “in two minutes.”

The community

Located on the banks of the St Lawrence River, Quebec City is one of the oldest European settlements in North America. A popular tourist destination in the predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec, it is perhaps best known for the picturesque, cobblestoned streets of Vieux-Quebec (Old Quebec), an annual winter carnival, and the historic



Plains of Abraham river-side park.

The Islamic Cultural Centre sits off a main thoroughfare in the city’s residential Sainte-Foy neighbourhood. Labidi says the building underwent a recent renovation, making it about a third larger than when the attack took place, and the mosque’s carpeting is now red, changed from the green that had been stained with blood.

A solid, white exterior wall was built to face the street, providing more protection than the previous glass façade. New security measures are also in place, including electronic key cards for entry, a security desk that is manned during all prayers, and two additional emergency exit doors.

Yet even with the changes, the tragedy that took place exactly five years ago this week is never far from people’s thoughts.

Outside the mosque, three black stone plinths stand in a memorial to those killed. Each is adorned with two names: Azzeddine Soufiane and Aboubaker Thabti; Khaled Belkacemi and Abdelkrim Hassane; and Ibrahima Barry and Mamadou Tanou Barry. A quote, in French and Arabic, by Lebanese poet Khalil Gibra is etched on another black stone: “One may not reach the dawn save by the path of the night.”

For Khadija Thabti, whose husband Aboubaker was among those fatally shot, January has become the toughest month of the year. “When we get to that date [January 29], it’s very difficult for us as a family,”

the 44-year-old mother of two children, aged eight and 16, tells Al Jazeera in a phone interview. “Even today ... when I speak about it, I cry.”

The Thabti family moved to Quebec in 2011 from their native Tunisia – a move that Khadija says she was not 100 percent in favour of, because it meant she would have to leave her family and friends. But she says her husband gave her the courage to move to Canada.

“I told myself, ‘It’s OK, with my partner, with my love, it’ll be OK.’ But now I’m alone,” she says. She describes her husband as a loving man who was always smiling – and whose death has left a tremendous hole in her life. “We arrived with many dreams,” Khadija says. “And he was taken from us just like that, suddenly. He went to pray at a mosque and didn’t come back. Imagine – it’s not easy, really.”

The shooter

About 40 people were inside the Islamic Cultural Centre that Sunday five years ago, when Bissonnette arrived shortly after the day’s final prayer with a semi-automatic rifle and handgun.

The then-27-year-old shot and killed two men as they left the building – Ibrahima Barry and Mamadou Tanou Barry, friends who shared the same surname but were unrelated – before going inside and firing at worshippers in the main prayer room, killing four. In all, he shot 48 handgun rounds before leaving the mosque and later turning himself in. Bissonnette told police

after his arrest that a fear of refugees flooding into Quebec pushed him to commit his deadly rampage.

On January 28, 2017, a day before the attack, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted: “To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada”. Trudeau was responding to then-US President Donald Trump’s order to bar citizens of several Muslim-majority nations from entering the United States – a divisive and widely condemned policy known as the “Muslim ban”.

“I was watching TV, and we found out that the Canadian government was going to take in more refugees; those who couldn’t go to the US would come here. I saw that and it was like I lost my mind,” Bissonnette told a police investigator during a three-hour interview the day after the shooting, adding that he had been having suicidal thoughts.

Local media later reported that Bissonnette “searched for Trump-related material 819 times over the month before the attack”. A police report on the contents of his computer also said Bissonnette had consumed right-wing and far-right material, which influenced his “opinion on immigration and the presence of Muslims in Quebec”, according to the Montreal Gazette newspaper.

The hate

Hakim Chambaz says he had a decision to make: face his trauma head-on, or shield himself from

the full truth of what happened. He chose the former – and remained in the courtroom during Bissonnette’s trial when security camera footage of the attack was shown.

“It allowed me to see what I hadn’t seen,” Chambaz tells Al Jazeera in an interview at a national park in Levis, Quebec, a suburb just across a bridge from Quebec City where he lives with his family. “I said to myself, ‘OK, I’m going to go, I’m going to watch, and I’m going to overcome.’”

While he escaped physically unscathed, Chambaz, like other survivors, says the images of that night still run through his mind, especially as the anniversary approaches every year. Chambaz saved the life of a young girl who was inside the mosque when the shooting broke out, shielding her behind a column that was no wider than 40cm.

When we get to that date (January 29), it’s very difficult for us as a family. Even today ... when I speak about it, I cry

KHADIJA THABTI

He and other members of Quebec City’s Muslim community are unequivocal: their mosque was targeted because of Islamophobia. That makes fighting such hatred crucial to preventing similar tragedies, says Chambaz.

“We need to think about the future of this city (and) try to build a new revival for the Muslim community here, which would like to live in peace and harmony ... far from systemic racism, Islamophobia and discrimination.”

Over the past five years, community members have pushed decision-makers at all levels to denounce Islamophobia and put concrete measures in place to curb incitement and hate-fuelled violence, including through stricter gun control laws.

Trudeau, who immediately called the killings a “terrorist attack on Mus-

Cont. on page 13

Cont. from page 3. Hashir Faruqi

his office near Finsbury Street uninvited. He welcomed a youth like me with open arms, showering his blessing like an elder who knew me for ages and didn't allow me to leave without sharing sumptuous lunch with him. He continued

to write to me without me regularly responding to his emails. His death will be unforgettable, especially for those who yearned to see credible Muslim media. Before Aljazeera and other new-age media, Impact was a torchbearer for enthusiasts of the Muslim press."

Mohammad Ghazali

Khan, one of the British journalists trained by Faruqi, said in his post on Facebook. "One of the pillars of Muslim journalism in Britain, Muhammad Hashir Faruqi, died in London today. I worked with him for more than eight years. Not only was he my teacher in practical journalism, but he also

did many personal favors to me. May Allah SWT grant him."

Dr. Syed Saeed, the former prominent of the Islamic Society of North America and a well-recognized Muslim American leader, wrote: "We worked together on many issues, and I invited him multiple times to our conventions."

Faruqi left behind him three sons, Ausaf, Rafay, and Irfan, and a daughter, Sadia, and all the editions of the Impact. His wife, Fakhira Begum, passed away a few years ago. The following website has his writings. <http://www.salaam.co.uk/impact-international/>

Cont. from page 12. Quebec Mosque

lims", has since faced criticism and calls to do more to stem Islamophobia. Those demands grew louder in the aftermath of a string of hate-fuelled incidents, including an attack that left four members of a Muslim family dead in London, Ontario, last June.

In response to the London killings, Trudeau's government organised a National Summit on Islamophobia, a move that was welcomed by advocates as a good first step. In January 2021, Ottawa also designated January 29 as the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia.

"The killings that happened in the last five years are the result of a lot of hate that can be prevented through policies," says Lina El Bakir, Quebec advocacy coordinator at the National Council of Canadian Muslims, which pushed to have January 29 recognised as a national day against Islamophobia. "So we are looking at our leaders to take a concrete stance and concrete measures to counter that."

The province

While Islamophobia remains a pressing issue across Canada, it has become especially so in Quebec, where a history of fighting to push the Roman Catholic Church out of public life has morphed into a form of secularism that civil rights groups say now discriminates against religious minorities – and Muslims in particular.

A recent law banning some public sector workers from donning religious symbols on the job is being challenged in the courts, and the case could ultimately end

up before the Supreme Court of Canada. The legislation, known as Bill 21, has been denounced by activists and legal experts as unconstitutional, and especially harmful to Muslim women who wear the hijab.

Many advocates have also criticised the Quebec government, saying right-wing Premier Francois Legault's refusal to acknowledge that systemic racism and Islamophobia exist in the province is counterproductive. Legault in 2019 said he did not support a national day against Islamophobia because "there is no Islamophobia in Quebec." He later revised his comments, saying "there is Islamophobia, xenophobia, racism and hatred, but no Islamophobic current" in Quebec. The province "is not Islamophobic or racist", he added.?

For Bakir, this attitude – and the "Othering" of Muslims in Quebec – are part of the problem.

"Being Muslim and being Quebecois are not mutually exclusive, and this needs to be put forward in [public discourse]," she tells Al Jazeera, adding that resources need to be allocated to better educating the next generations of Quebecers against hateful views. "We need to see leaders [and] grassroots organisations fight together to make sure that no one feels like they are not accepted within Quebec. Unfortunately, Bill 21 does that; that's why we need to fight it."

The sentencing

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of Canada is set to take up a legal challenge to Bissonnette's prison sentence for the mosque attack later this year – a process that survivors say will undoubtedly stir up painful memories.

Bissonnette pleaded

guilty in 2018 to six counts of first-degree murder and six counts of attempted murder. "I am ashamed, ashamed of what I did. I do not know why I committed such a senseless act," he told the court as he entered his plea. A few weeks later, however, prosecutors said a prison social worker had reported that Bissonnette told her he regretted not killing more people at the mosque, the Montreal Gazette and other local media reported.

A year later, Quebec Superior Court Justice Francois Huot sentenced him to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 40 years. Bissonnette had faced as many as 150 years without a chance at parole under a 2011 law that allows Canadian courts to hand down consecutive sentences (each first-degree murder count comes with 25 years). But Huot said such a lengthy penalty would be "unreasonable".

Bissonnette's lawyers appealed the sentence, and in November 2020, the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled (PDF) that the Canadian sentencing provisions were unconstitutional and should be struck down. It reduced Bissonnette's sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 25 years. But Quebec appealed to the Supreme Court, asking for the gunman to be barred from accessing parole for 50 years. The top court will hear the case in March.

Aymen Derbali, a 45-year-old father of three who was shot seven times during the attack and paralysed from the chest down, says he struggles to understand the sentencing decisions. Speaking to Al Jazeera from his home in Quebec City, which has been adapted to allow him to

more easily move around in a wheelchair, Derbali says the law clearly states that in cases of multiple murders, 25-year periods of parole ineligibility can be applied consecutively for each person killed.

"Why are we the only case where they didn't apply it?" he says, pointing to the sentencing of Justin Bourque, who shot and killed three police officers in the eastern province of New Brunswick in 2014 and was given life in prison without the possibility of parole for 75 years.

"This one [Bissonnette], he planned, he killed six in a house of worship. They gave him 25 years. What's the reason? Is this fair? Of course, it's unfair," Derbali says. "The law is a federal law ... We want it to be applied equitably everywhere in Canada. It's simple."

The future

Back at the Islamic Cultural Centre, a light but steady snow is falling as Mohamed Khabar, a local barber, points to the top of his knee and then to his big toe, where bullets hit him during the mosque attack. Bullet fragments are still embedded in his foot, a permanent memory of what happened. "Even though five years have passed, the attack is still there – it's still there physically, mentally," he says.

Khabar thought he was moments from death, as he watched friends he had been chatting with seconds earlier fall under a hail of bullets. "I didn't move, I didn't run. I thought to myself, 'This is it, maybe my life ends here, it's over for me,'" he recalls.

But after he was shot a second time and realised he was injured, Khabar hid in the basement of the mosque. Police even-

tually found him and took him to get medical care.

"The attack, it's something that is engraved in your memory. I can't forget it. I feel as though something got broken. It was never repaired; we can't repair it. You live with it – because you have no other choice," he says, adding that support from the Muslim community has helped him cope with the ongoing psychological toll.

Ibrahim Sbair, another attack survivor, says the sense of community has only become stronger in the aftermath of the violence. "There is something inside of me that has broken since that moment, seeing my brothers and everything," he says, his voice trailing off. "Life continues. The damage is done, but what we want is for it never to happen again, for it to stop – this hatred."

More people are attending prayers at the mosque now than before the attack, both Sbair and Labidi say, as people have refused to allow the shooting to prevent them from being together. The mosque provides a place of solace, Sbair adds: "Going to the mosque, that's something essential – and this act is not going to stop us."

Khabar, who also continues to pray at the mosque, agrees: the Muslim community of Quebec City will remain unwavering and carry on. "Of course, the consequences are still there – physically, mentally – but the courage is still there, too," he says. "That we will stay here, that we will go to our mosque, and that no one will stop us from going to the mosque and saying what we believe. That's what's essential."

Cont. from page 1.
Moroccan Boy

and sympathy.

According to the BBC “In a Facebook post, French President Emmanuel Macron wrote: “Tonight, I want to tell the family of little Rayan and the Moroccan people that we share their pain.”

The statement from Morocco’s royal palace described Rayan’s death as a “tragic accident”, adding: “His Majesty King Mohammed VI called the parents of the boy who died after falling down the well.” The king had expressed his deepest condolences and sincere compassion, it added. Rayan’s father was repairing the well at the time of the accident on Tuesday. He told local media the following day that his son had fallen

down the shaft at “that one moment I took my eyes off him”, adding: “I haven’t slept a wink.”

His funeral was held on Feb. 7. According to Al Jazeera, “A public funeral has been held for a five-year-old boy who fell down well in Morocco, prompting large-scale but ultimately unsuccessful rescue efforts. Large crowds gathered in the village of Ighran to mourn the boy, Rayan Oram.”

Furthermore, “There were so many mourners that they could not all fit into the village cemetery and prayer site. Two large tents were erected in front of the grieving family’s house, where mourners could stop to offer condolences.” The death was publicized because of the age of the victim and how much

time and effort.

On this earth, about 150,000 people will die every day in the world but we don’t report on all of their deaths because of the vast majority of these are expected or otherwise immemorable, but this particular case was noteworthy because of the circumstances of the boy dying and the fact that so much effort was put into his rescue.

Yet, we are told in the Qur’ān that god does not advance a soul when its time has come (63:10). In that sense, statements like he died too early or he had his life ahead of him are apparently false. Nevertheless, there can be many things to be learned from this lesson. For one, this was indeed a tragedy but not for Rayan from an Islamic perspective as the pen of

accountability was not writing his needs since he was still a child meaning that he will enter the highest levels of paradise along with the prophet Ibrahim (PBUH).

That’s a rank far greater than any of us can hope to attain, making his death a tragedy more for the living. For Muslims, let this be a reminder that we are merely tourists in this life with our true homes being in the afterlife either in a state of bliss or torment.

We have to do our best to make sure it is the former by making sure that we are fulfilling our duties to both God and humanity. For the non-Muslims, even though Rayan’s life was shorter than ours, know that the ratio of his life relative to everything that happens after is not

that much shorter than the length of our lives relative to all that comes after.

Consequently, we all have to do our due diligence to assure that what we are doing will have positive consequences for us in the long run, not just this life. If you are 100% certain that there is no life after death, then continue to live as you are with no change. But even if there is an infinitesimally small chance that there is an afterlife, be sure to do your due diligence to look into all the different claims about the afterlife, including that of the fastest-growing major religion, Islam and see how it compares to the others. Don’t count on being excused for disregarding it based on false stereotypes of us as violent terrorists.

Cont. from page 1.
Ahmaud Arbery

bery’s death. By Friday, Travis McMichael also confirmed that he would also plead not guilty. As a result, jury selection in the federal trial will begin Monday.

Both father and son had planned to plead guilty to a hate crime charge after prosecutors and defense attorneys agreed on a 30-year sentence that would include a request to transfer the McMichaels from Georgia’s state prison system to federal custody. However, taking Arbery’s family’s pleas into account, U.S. District Judge Lisa Godbey Wood rejected the deal

that would have locked her into specific terms.

After the plea was rejected, the men were given until Friday to decide whether or not they would plead guilty to charges of a hate crime.

According to NBC News, Lee Merritt, an attorney for Arbery’s mother, Wanda Cooper Jones, the family is pleased that the federal trial will go forward.

“If convicted, these men return to a Georgia state prison to serve out their life sentences,” Merritt said. “If acquitted, these men return to a Georgia state prison to serve out their life sentence. It’s a win-win. That is what

Wanda Cooper Jones demanded. That is what will happen.”

Hate crime charges came into the picture when the state said it gathered racial evidence including “racial” Facebook posts and text messages from Travis McMichael and Bryan, in addition to what they described as a “racial Johnny Rebel Facebook post” and an “Identity Dixie Facebook post” from Gregory McMichael, The New York Times reported.

While the state jury was not able to consider them, officials are expecting them to take the stage of this trial.

“It’s not just proving that

they’re racists, and not just proving that they killed Ahmaud Arbery without justification,” Page Pate, a Georgia lawyer and legal analyst, told the Times. “It’s proving that their racism is the reason they killed Ahmaud Arbery.”

During hearings for the proposed plea deal, prosecutors attempted to argue that race did not motivate the McMichaels; instead, they argued, assumptions were made based on Arbery’s skin tone.

“Travis McMichael did not belong to any hate groups, and did not set out on Feb. 23, 2020, to carry out an act of vio-

lence against an African American person,” Tara M. Lyons, assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Georgia, said. “But he had made assumptions about Ahmaud Arbery that he would not have made if Ahmaud Arbery had been white.”

While all three men were charged with a hate crime and separately sentenced to life in person, only the McMichaels seem to have been offered a plea deal. According to The New York Times, as of Friday, the Justice Department has not filed any documents indicating that they have reached a deal with Bryan.

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Canadian Masters

half a dozen worshippers during evening prayers.

This among other reasons prompted McGill University graduate student Sarah Abou-Bakr to study the relationship between the province of Québec and Islamophobia.

According to McGill Reporter, “She also led the planning and organization of community consultations, events, and workshops specifically related to contemporary Muslim issues in Quebec, such as Bill 21 (the controversial secularism law), Bill 64 (which overhauls Que-

bec’s privacy laws), and the aftermath of the 2017 mosque shooting”.

For context, Bill 21 is a law in Québec that excludes public servants from wearing “ostentatious religious clothing” which would include Hijabs, Kippas and Sikh turbans. This stems from Québec’s general dislike of religion and desire to see it erased from public life due to a negative relationship with its own historical religion of Catholicism. Though, many commentators consider such phrases about neutrality to be pretexts for Islamophobia and anti-Sikh sentiments/ motivations to be really rooted in Islamophobia

as visible male Sikhs are commonly mistaken for Muslims and therefore the subject of hate crimes and harassment by people acting on Islamophobia.

In describing her own work, Abou-Bakr said “I believe that one way to foster understanding is for our stories to be heard, and by telling mine, I am humanizing who I am, and humanizing people who look like me and share the same beliefs as me. That alone is an impact because it makes people aware of the problems deeply embedded in our Canadian society that Muslims face every day because of lack of inclusion.”

Informed Brief Editorial:

As someone who worked in the Canadian Parliament in the months following the Québec City shooting, I can testify that Islamophobia is pervasive in Canadian Society as I had to walk by Islamophobic protestors exercising their free speech rights to claim that people are trying to take away their free speech rights to be Islamophobic. While it has not seeped into official institutional policy outside of Québec, it is definitely something that needs to be addressed in Canada generally as within the last year a Muslim family was literally run over by someone probably

acting on Islamophobic motives. Additionally, about Québec itself, the symbolic overtures and vigils condemning that act are appreciated but while it pursues policies validating Islamophobic sentiments like the so-called charter of values and Bill 21, such attacks will continue to occur as the hate that produced them is being reinforced at the policy level. Words are not enough to demonstrate genuine concern for Muslim life and safety but must be accompanied by action from the highest levels of government to change anti-Muslim society to build a truly conducive society.



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