



First Time In 30 Years, Easter, Passover And Ramadan Align



Jews, Christians and Muslims around the world all saw a rare overlap of major religious observances this weekend, bringing a confluence of reflections for communi-

ties making up the three monotheistic traditions.

On Friday, Jewish people celebrated Passover to mark the exodus of Israelites from enslavement in Egypt. On the same

day, Christians observed Good Friday to commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus before celebrating Easter Sunday when he rose from the dead. Over the weekend, Muslims

will continue observing Ramadan, a month of prayers and fasting to memorialize the transmission of the Koran.

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How Technology Can Help Muslims Reconnect This Ramadan



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An interview with Bitsmedia's Nik Emir Din conducted by Saeed Khan

There are many reasons to be excited about Bitsmedia, a Singapore-based tech

company that has made a name for itself with Muslim Pro – a faith app catering to over 120 million users worldwide. Two of those reasons? Nik Emir Din and Fara

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White House Ramadan Message




Jill and I extend our best wishes to Muslim communities here in the United States and around the world on the beginning of the blessed month of Ramadan.

For so many around the globe, including fellow Americans all

across the country, this sacred month is a time for reflection and spiritual growth. Communities come together to practice forgiveness and resilience, to show compassion and generosity of spirit to those in need, of

Cont. on page 4




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Op Ed: US Must Stop "Monitoring" Human Rights Crisis In India, Start Acting



by Pieter Friedrich

Response to Secretary Blinken's remarks on human rights in India

On the 11th of April, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a press conference in Washington, DC with the US Secretary of Defense and their Indian counterparts. At the press conference, Blinken stated:

"We regularly engage with our Indian partners on these shared values (of human rights) and to that end, we are monitoring some recent concerning developments in India including a rise in human rights abuses by some government, police and prison officials."

That was the extent of Blinken's remarks on the issue.

Indian Muslims are facing an impending genocide. Eliminating Muslims from the land in their relentless quest to turn India into a Hindu nation is a primary goal of the RSS, the Nazi-inspired paramilitary that controls the country's ruling party, the BJP.

Under the Modi regime, we've seen lynchings, the CAA/NRC, the Delhi Pogrom, concentration camps constructed in Assam, interfaith marriages criminalized, Muslims banned from wearing hijab in schools, calls for an economic boycott of Muslims, Muslim merchants attacked, homes burned, mosques burned, calls for raping Muslim women, repeated calls for the mass slaughter of Muslims, governments razing Muslim neighborhoods, parade after parade after parade of gangs of hundreds of armed Hindu nationalists brandishing swords and dancing themselves into a frenzy of hate in front of mosques, and.... And.... And....

And need I really go on?

But this is the best that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken can manage: "We are monitoring a rise in human rights abuses."

Blinken's statement is worth less than the millisecond it took for him to say it and then move on. It is utterly meaningless without action. It's a statement made solely, I am convinced, to attempt to soothe the growing cries of the critics.

Blinken just wants to shut people like you and me up so he can get on with business as usual. But, as one of those critics, let me remind him: my own ask has never been for the US government to "monitor" what is happening in India, but rather to stop passively watching and start taking real action before it's too damn late.

There are already some commentators who — understandably desperate for something to give — are heralding this as an example of the US finally giving a firm rebuke to Modi.

It's rare! It's unprecedented! Yes and yes, and yes, it also accomplishes absolutely nothing.

A little over six months ago, Modi visited the US.

Both President Biden and Vice-President Harris gave speeches alongside him. Harris gave a speech in which she, briefly, emphasized the importance of defending democracy (while suggesting that such a vision may not yet have been fully achieved). Biden gave a speech in which he highlighted, briefly, the present-day urgency of Gandhi's "message of non-violence, respect, [and] tolerance."

Desperately hungry for the US to say something about the growing human rights crisis in Modi's India, many commentators jumped on that as an example of how Biden and Harris were both expressing concern.

They were "gently" pressing Modi on human rights, we were told, and "subtly" conveying criticism.

Yeah, right.

It was so subtle and so gentle that this is where we are today: just six months closer to the impending Muslim genocide breaking out in full force.

Six months from now, Blinken's "rare" remark that the US is "monitoring" a rise in human rights abuses in India will be as forgotten as the "subtle" and "gentle" hint, hinting by Biden and Harris. Six months from now, the situation in India will have become radically worse than it is today.

Will Blinken still be "monitoring" the situation then — or will he be openly criticizing the Modi regime for sanctioning the mass murder of its Muslim citizens?

Here's my call to you if you are a US citizen who cares about this issue. Don't be afraid to call out Blinken's remarks for the useless, toothless comments that they are. Tell the US Congress and the Biden administration that we want real action.

What does real action look like?

Well, it does, at least, look like making remarks. But not remarks like Blinken made.

We need remarks with real teeth. They must be unvarnished, honest remarks which call the situation what it is: one of impending genocide. They must be remarks which actually recognize, criticize, and denounce.

Because lives hang in the balance, it's imperative that we refuse to settle, and demand something real. Demand that the US quit "monitoring" and start acting.

Israel Attacks Palestinians In Al-Aqsa Mosque And Jenin During Ramadan



By Yousuf Ali

On Friday, April 15 Israel attacked masjid al-aqs? in East Jerusalem injuring over 100 worshippers. For context, the site is the third most holy place in the Islamic tradition. Additionally, the site is the location of the temple mount which Jews hold to be sacred but are traditionally banned from entering until the coming of their Messiah which they do not believe has come.

The city has been under Israeli occupation since 1967 despite being internationally recognized as

Palestinian territory. In previous weeks, Israel has also gone on offenses in Jenin leading to Palestinian deaths. According to Al Jazeera, "Israeli authorities said they entered the compound on Sunday (the 17th) to facilitate routine visits by far-right Jews to the holy site and that Palestinians had stockpiled stones and set up barriers in the compound." This led to 19 Palestinians being injured in defense of the site. The context is an extremist Jewish organization offering a reward for someone to defile the site by

sacrificing a goat inside the mosque leading to more provocation. These events have provoked serious reactions both in and outside of Palestine.

The events at al-Aqsa have inspired a variety of reactions from many different factions and groups. The Palestinian Authority condemned the Israeli actions as an attempt to "Judaize Al-Aqsa Mosque." according to Al Jazeera. Hamas, the group in control of Gaza, declared that "The head of Hamas warned Israel that "Al-Aqsa is ours and ours alone" and "Our people have the right to ac-

cess it and pray in it, and we will not bow down to (Israeli) repression and terror," Ismail Haniyeh said in a statement.

Pope Francis called for free access to the Jerusalem holy sites: "May Israelis, Palestinians and all who dwell in the Holy City, together with the pilgrims, experience the beauty of peace, dwell in fraternity and enjoy free access to the Holy Places in mutual respect for the rights of each".

Marwan Bishara described the Israeli actions as "denying the

Palestinians any sense of sovereignty over their most sacred site, which is the Noble Sanctuary," and a continuing of neo-colonialism. For more context, last year's assault on Al-Aqsa led to an 11-day bombardment of Gaza by Israel. The immediate context was Israel killing 4 Palestinians in Jenin ostensibly in response to attacks on Israelis even though not all those killed were responsible for the stabbings according to Al Jazeera. Observers are carefully watching if events escalate.

Cont. from page 1. White House Ramadan Message

giving, and to celebrate the many blessings of life with loved ones.

This year, the simple act of breaking the fast will be an even more poignant reminder of the joys of health, family, and community. And we will continue to hold in our hearts all those families grieving a lost loved one who are facing an empty chair at the table.

As we continue to rebuild from the pandemic, we must also continue all of our efforts to stand with all those who are suffering and vulnerable around the world, those who are facing persecution or hardship. As

the Holy Qur'an teaches, "whoever does even an atom's weight of good will see its results."

Every day, we see heartbreaking accounts of lost lives and the images of families and children struggling to survive. These tragedies remind us of our common humanity—and the common teaching of all great faiths, including Islam—that we should always do unto others as we would have done unto us. During this holy month, as Muslims everywhere honor God's great mercy let us also renew our shared commitment to show kindness, mercy, and understanding to one another. Let us honor the simple yet profound truth that all people are equal

in dignity and rights. That's why the United States will continue to speak out for human rights everywhere—including for Uyghurs in China, Rohingya in Bur-

ma, and other Muslim communities all over the world.

From the Biden family to yours, and from the People's House to your own homes, Jill and I

wish you and your loved ones a blessed and prosperous month. Ramadan Kareem!



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Imran Khan Is No Longer The Prime Minister Of Pakistan

By Mahvish Akhtar

Prime Minister Imran Khan has been removed from office through a no-confidence motion passed by the Supreme Court. The National Assembly (NA) of Pakistan deliberated on the matter for more than 12 hours before deciding. Since NA Speaker Mr. Asad Qasier had already resigned from his post, the session was chaired by Mr. Ayaz Sadiq; a panel chair member.

“174 members have recorded their votes in favor of the resolution. Consequently, the resolution for the vote on no-confidence against Mr. Imran Khan, the former prime minister of Pakistan, has been passed by a majority,” Mr. Ayaz Sadiq announced after completing the process of voting. The resolution needed 172 votes to pass. The National Assembly of Pakistan consists of 342-member. Members



of the then ruling party, PTI, were not present in the House during the voting.

“Neither I, nor Bilawal, nor Maulana Fazlur Rehman will interfere. Law will be upheld, and we will respect the judiciary,” Mr. Shahbaz Sharif,

the President of PML-N, said, thanking Mr. Sadiq for chairing the historic session. The Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) leader Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi, also said that he is glad to be a part of the democratic movement. He took pride in his party, having contributed

“significant” four votes to the 170 figure, which helped the joint Opposition complete their total number. The session has been adjourned till 2 pm Monday, April 11th.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Mr. Belawal Bhutto said, “I would

like to congratulate the whole nation and this House, as for the first time in the country’s history, a no-confidence motion has succeeded, and we have made history.”

Getting to this historic

Cont. on page 12

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Pakistan Has A New Prime Minister

By TMO Staff

Pakistan National Assembly (NA) elected its 23rd Prime Minister on Monday, April 11, 2022. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif is the former Chief Minister of Punjab; Pakistan's most populated province. Mr. Sharif is also the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) political party. Despite having corruption charges against him, which he denies, he has always been considered a good administrator. The development brought during his administration in Punjab has been praised even by his political opponents.

The hope is that he can pull Pakistan from the financial crisis that it has been in throughout Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's rule. Even though former Prime Minister Imran Khan did not cause the economic downfall that led to his dismissal it was handed down to him when he took office. He



did, however, make it worse according to his rivals. Right now, Mr. Sharif seems to be in the same situation, if not worse.

The current Prime Minister does have experi-

ence with politics and dealing with economical messes so he might be better suited to handle this situation, at least as seems to be the hope of the moment. Pakistan is over \$100 billion in debt and needs over \$14

billion a year to meet debt servicing requirements on repaying loans that it owes to different international monetary institutions. The Prime Minister's supporters believe that as a former businessman and a

shrewd politician he will be able to breeze through these problems.

Foreign relations and policies are an entirely different matter, however. The country's foreign

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Op Ed: A Muslim Perspective On A Trip To Spain; Part 6

by Harris Imam

Our Andalusian expedition was just beginning. We flagged down our Uber driver from our Airbnb in the historic Santa Cruz neighborhood of Sevilla and headed towards the rental car center near the central train station. After about half an hour of waiting, the gentleman at the counter exclaimed “Sir, we are overbooked on cars so we have upgraded you to our next available car.”

I was overjoyed and without complaints to see the spacious Volvo XC-60, a Swedish mid-size SUV with plenty of character. To my relief, it was an automatic transmission. Although I was a bit nervous about driving in a new country, the Spanish roads seemed mostly straightforward. As we made our way outside the city of Sevilla, the traffic quickly thinned. My wife and I took turns driving as we cruised through the Andalusian countryside. The road to Ronda was mostly a two-lane road that was initially flat and became increasingly hilly as we got closer to the mountainous city.

A small historical town defined by its Puente Nuevo (or literally “New Bridge”), Ronda stood at a cliff that overlooked the countryside. The landscape of the town was impressively unique. 390 feet deep, the El Tajo gorge divided two parts of the town. These two parts were connected by Puente Nuevo, which was built in 1759. Viewers could see miles into the hilly countryside when standing on the bridge. Just adjacent to this bridge was the Parador de Ronda.

The Parador hotels are a group of government-run hotels that are usually adjacent to or within many historical landmarks in Spain including castles, monasteries, and, in this case, the Puente Nuevo. These hotels are intended to bolster tourism by the Spanish government and offer a unique experience. We were



Ronda – view from Parador



Abdul Azziz Mosque

pleasantly surprised to find Cafetería Armiñan, a halal restaurant, only two blocks away from the Parador in this quaint mountain town.

Here we met the owner of the restaurant who vivaciously told us the tales of his Muslim ancestors and took great pride in being their practicing Muslim descendant. During the “Reconquest of Spain”, his ancestors were required

to go to church on Sundays while they secretly read the Quran at home. While they feared for their lives if they were to get caught, they continued practicing Islam in secrecy. He noticed how he was grateful that now the situation was drastically different in Spain than what it was during the 16th century.

Next to the Parador de Ronda stood the Real Maestranza de Cabal-



Ronda

lería de Ronda or Bullring of the Royal Cavalry of Ronda. This 18th-

century circular building was one of many bull-

Cont. on page 12

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Op Ed: 2022 Ramadan Goals

By TMO Staff

With the sacred month of Ramadan upon us, it is important that we enter the month with clarity of purpose in order to get the most out of it. It is a time of great blessing and trial in which we will fast from all food and water from dawn until dusk all with the intention of seeking Allah's pleasure and becoming better Muslims. The last 2 Ramadans have been unique in that they have been nearly devoid of communal activities that typically characterize the month, but there should be more opportunities this Ramadan.

Nevertheless, it is still important to set individual spiritual goals along with the basic obligation of fasting to maximize one's potential and growth in this month. In that respect, I'd like to share with you my own not in hope that you may follow me but be inspired to make your own:

Finish reading the Qur'an with another qira'ah: I



have had the honor of memorizing the Qur'an during 2020 and have found Ramadan a good time to review what I have learned. And gain more. To that end, I have a special mushaf with footnotes pointing out the differences in the qira'at which I will read for this task. This can be done by reading 4 pages after each obligatory salah with accelerating during salah to finish in time for laylat al qadr in

the last 10 nights. Pray qiyaam al lail: in addition to the fasting during the day, the nights of Ramadan are blessed with many praying in the congregation, especially during tarawih. While the time for congregational prayer may be limited. There is still ample opportunity to gain during the night. In fact, we will all be getting up during the best time to pray at night (ie in the last 1/3rd of the

night. To that end, I'm happy to say that I've built a habit of praying shaf' and witr before fajr time and plan to maintain this and build on it during Ramadan. Avoid all sinful activities; the whole purpose of Ramadan is so that we become pious and sinning is completely antithetical to this goal. For that reason, it is essential for us to not only abstain from food and water but also from sins.

In that respect, we can do so by filling our time with devotional activities so we don't have time to sin. In that sense, learning the meanings of the Qur'an is just as important to achieving that end as finding out what constitutes sin and righteousness. With that, I finish with my Ramadan goals and hope that it inspires you to make your own.

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**Cont. from page 5.
Imran Khan**

moment has been a long road for the opposition parties. Towards the end of 2021, PPP started to persuade Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif to move a no-trust motion against PM Imran Khan. By January 11th, 2022, PML-N's close ally Mr. Khawaja Asif informed them that the government had lost the majority; and that they were making some in-house changes in the Parliament.

Separately most political parties in Pakistan were moving towards the same plan. However, there is strength in numbers. In the next few months, the opposition strengthened their alliances. Talks continued between political parties that had been morally, ethically, and religiously opposed to each other for decades. Some of them had vowed never to work

with one another. In the meantime, all parties from their own platforms had announced that they would put forth a no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister. This included PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto, PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, and MQM-P leader Amir Khan.

However, the government at the time was not taking these actions seriously and considered them merely empty threats. On February 14th, 2022, Foreign Minister Mr. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the government would challenge the no-confidence motion politically as the "umpire" was also neutral. About a week later, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed challenged the Opposition to gather 172 MNAs in their camp, which they did end up doing. While the country was dealing with this

uncertain situation, the PM saw it fit to leave the country on February 23rd, 2022, to meet with the Russian President.

Defence Minister Mr. Pervez Khattak was confident that the no-confidence motion would not be tabled as it was "not easy" to turn PTI MNAs. Nevertheless, in March 2021, opposition leader and former PM Mr. Yusuf Raza Gilani defeated Pakistan's finance minister, Mr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, in elections for the Senate, the upper house of Parliament. This came as a significant setback for Mr. Khan, who had personally campaigned for his Cabinet colleague.

However, Mr. Imran Khan won the trust vote in National Assembly following the defeat of his finance minister, ending the political uncertainty in the country. He secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament. The floor test took place

without the Opposition as PDM, an alliance of 11 parties, boycotted the vote. This made it easier for Mr. Khan to secure the required numbers. Towards the end of the year, The Pakistan PM had sought a vote of confidence to restore the legitimacy of his government after the Opposition mounted pressure on him to resign.

The motion no-confidence against PM Imran Khan was finally tabled on March 8th, 2022. Eventually, it was passed in the supreme court for many reasons that were deemed worth looking into. One day before the premier was voted out of power, during an address to the nation, he told the public that he would not tolerate the installation of a "foreign government" in Pakistan and would turn to the public for support if such a thing happens. "We are not a nation that can be used like tissue papers," the former PM said during a live telecast. He urges

his supporters to come out and protest peacefully for him.

PTI supporters gathered across the country to protest Imran Khan's dismissal. PTI management showed on Twitter that the protesters gathered at more than 40 locations in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to no avail.

The NA will continue to function until the completion of its five-year term in August 2023. The new prime minister will perform his duties till the assembly's tenure ends.

However, following the dismissal of Mr. Imran Khan, his cabinet has automatically been dissolved, and the NA Speaker Mr. Asad Qaiser and Deputy Speaker Mr. Qasim Suri have tendered their resignations. The new Prime Minister will choose his new cabinet. PML-N's Shahbaz Sharif is the frontrunner for the role of PM.

**Cont. from page 6.
Shahbaz Sharif**

policy has traditionally been influenced by the Pakistani military, and some critics say that this influence will increase under Mr. Sharif. Even though Mr. Khan was heavily backed by the Pakistan Armed Forces. It was only when the Armed Forces couldn't justify backing his decisions that the opposition was able to take a clear shot at his government.

Islamabad-based analyst Dr. Aman Memon thinks that Mr. Sharif is a non-confrontational leader with little experience in foreign affairs. Hence, the military will likely be able to exert influence, especially regarding relations with the US, India, and Afghanistan.

In his first address as Prime Minister in the National Assembly, Mr. Sharif announced an increase in salaries, pensions, and the minimum wage. Mr. Sharif

discussed the failures of the previous government in foreign policy and said he will expedite the multibillion-dollar China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and rebuild broken ties with partners and allies. "We want good relations with India but there cannot be sustainable peace unless the issue of Kashmir is resolved," he said.

Mr. Sharif also invited his Indian counterpart to help solve the Kashmir dispute in line

with United Nations resolutions. The Prime Minister addressed the allegations made by Mr. Khan that the United States conspired with his opponents to topple his government. Mr. Sharif insisted that if "our involvement in this matter is proven, then I myself will resign from here and go home."

US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken on Wednesday congratulated newly elected Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif

and vowed to continue its long-standing cooperation with Pakistan's government. A statement issued said that Pakistan had been an important partner in wide-ranging mutual interests for nearly 75 years and the US values their relationship. "The United States views a strong, prosperous, and democratic Pakistan as essential for the interests of both countries," he added.

**Cont. from page 7.
Trip To Spain**

rings that house the renowned Spanish-style bullfighting. Although no bull flight was happening during our visit, we had the opportunity to learn more about the history of bullfighting. We also learned that bullfights have decreased recently due to an ongoing anti-bullfighting movement.

The next morning we checked out of our hotel and made our downhill drive on route A-397. This scenic, narrow, winding road descended from the mountains near Ronda and terminated in the coastal city of Mar-

bella. From the many high vantage points along the drive, one could see the glistening blue of the Mediterranean Sea in the distance. As we made our way closer to the city of Marbella, we could see spectacular cliffside homes in the distance.

One particular area called La Zagaleta oozed opulence. At the bottom of the descent, lay the city of Marbella, a coastal town with meticulously manicured shrubbery alongside its spotless boulevards. The entire area here seemed as if it were an architectural rendering of what a perfect city would look like. Here, we visited

the Mezquita del Rey Abdulaziz al Saud or the King Abdulaziz Mosque. This pristine white mosque surrounded by palm trees was definitely one of the most beautiful mosques I had ever come across. The caretaker of the mosque allowed us to see it from inside and told us that there were many Muslims residing in the area, largely of Moroccan descent.

From Marbella, we hopped on N-340, a road that runs along the southern coast of Spain, and headed east. This drive was by far the most spectacular drive I had ever taken. Passing through sever-

al coastal towns as the road hugged the shore, it eventually became more hilly with winding turns and dramatic cliffs which overlooked the Mediterranean. This drive was reminiscent of California's Highway 1, but I thought the views here were even more breathtaking.

Along the way, came the ancient city of Málaga. I should add that our original plan was to visit Gibraltar, a British Overseas Territory located on the southern tip of the Iberian peninsula. However, due to COVID-related restrictions and the need for multiple testing, we instead decided to

visit Málaga. This was no mistake as Málaga offered beautiful sea views and history that traces back to the 8th century B.C. when it was founded by the Phoenicians. Although our time here was limited, we were able to enjoy the seaside along with some delicious biryani found in one of the beach boardwalk restaurants. The next stop on our journey was Granada, the home of the Alhambra.

**Cont. from page 1.
Technology Can Help
Muslims Reconnect**

Abdullah, young and energetic Muslim leaders, are Bitsmedia's new co-CEOs. From a modest start-up that's become one of the world's largest faith-based apps, Bitsmedia's journey is remarkable. Not only considering where Bitsmedia is planning to go next. But considering where Bitsmedia has come from.

In 2020, Bitsmedia was left stunned when an investigative piece alleged that Muslim Pro user data had been sold to the US military by a third-party handler. But Bitsmedia did not sweep this crisis under the rug. They spent enormous amounts of time and energy doing what was necessary to win back the trust of tens of millions around the world had placed in Muslim Pro. Today, Bitsmedia is stronger than ever—and making waves once more. With Fara and Nik at the helm, it won't be long before Bitsmedia is a household name across the Muslim world.

Because, very much as we might expect, Nik and Fara have big plans for Bitsmedia's future.

Exploring the possibilities of a media and entertainment service, the company is making a quantum leap forward for the online Muslim world.

For Nik, though, media and entertainment isn't just an outstanding opportunity to represent Muslim communities through Bitsmedia. It's a chance to empower them as well.

As a Muslim connected to his faith and faith community, Nik finds the lack of Muslim representation disheartening. Though they make up almost a quarter of the world's population, Muslims remain almost invisible in the entertainment industry. While a few Muslim stars like Riz Ahmed and Hasan Minhaj have made undeniable progress, Muslims worldwide have only begun to scratch the surface of what is possible. Countless stories are waiting to be explored.

Technology, Nik un-

derstands, has been instrumental in keeping Muslims spiritually connected during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to play a role in enabling young Muslims to access their faith wherever they are. But tech also provides a means for platforms like Bitsmedia to elevate Muslim voices, perspectives, and profiles globally. Especially in arts, culture, and entertainment. We know, because Nik told us.

We had the chance to get Nik away from his packed schedule. We talked to him about his time at Bitsmedia, how his faith informs his success—and what we can expect to see in the future.

Congratulations on the new job, Nik! What's been going on over at Bitsmedia since you and Fara took over?

Alhamdulillah! Thank you so much. The last few months have been a real ride!

There's a lot of hustle and bustle at Bitsmedia's headquarters here in Singapore. We're currently working on some very exciting new projects. Fara and I are ready to take things to the next level with Muslim Pro. I'm thrilled to announce that the app will be expanding into a fully-fledged Muslim lifestyle accompaniment. We're going beyond ritual and faith, while keeping them at the heart of Muslim Pro, to create a holistic way to experience faith through tech. Not just through prayer, but also through where and what we eat, what we do in the day, the films we watch. And there's a lot to be excited about.

For example, we recently introduced Streak Rewards which is currently being rolled out in phases to our users. This new feature encourages our users to keep track of their daily ibadah or religious practices. Just by logging in to the Muslim Pro app and checking in daily for prayer timings, finding Qibla, or reading the Qur'an, they may receive rewards in the form of premium subscription access. What's more, the rewards can also be

shared with friends and family to encourage them to work on their daily rituals as well.

But that's not all. There's "Ramadan Reconnect," our Ramadan campaign for 2022/1443H.

Like everyone else, Muslims around the world suffered a long, challenging period of isolation, disconnecting them from the disciplines and experiences that give their lives so much meaning. The idea behind "Ramadan Reconnect" was to rekindle the connections that matter most – allowing Muslims anywhere and everywhere to make the most of a very special month. With "Ramadan Reconnect," we're reconnecting the global Muslim community to its spiritual roots. To its spiritual foundations. To make this Ramadan all it can be. So, this Ramadan, we invite users to reconnect with their faith and to Muslim Pro through a holistic experience for users to observe and experience the 30 days of Ramadan through our many different content and spiritual offerings (food, health, soul, conversations, etc.). And for our users to get the best experience they can with our app for their daily ibadah, we are giving our users globally a 50% off our annual premium subscription.

And that's not even the biggest piece of news.

What's the biggest news at Bitsmedia? Let's hear more about it!

I'm excited to share that Bitsmedia is all set to make its mark in arts, culture, and storytelling! That's all I'll say for now. Don't want to ruin any surprises. But this, combined with our Ramadan Reconnect campaign, really mark a new turning point for Muslim Pro and Bitsmedia. Faith is at the heart of what we do, but we realize that faith. That's what makes this particular lifestyle brand revolutionary.

Exciting times ahead, to be sure and I hope that our Muslim community is excited for it just as we are.

Muslim Pro could do a lot to build understanding across

populations and cultures. That's a lot of responsibility. Would you say that's something you're focused on?

A lot more needs to be done to accurately to represent the diversity of the global Muslim community. Part of what's driving Bitsmedia to expand beyond Muslim Pro as our Muslim lifestyle brand is the lack of representation our extremely diverse community suffers.

Even in what passes for Muslim entertainment, there is a great deal of focus on the Middle East and South Asia, and not much else, to be honest. We can definitely do more to make sure Muslims all over the world have the chance to tell their stories – for them to be heard and be seen. Take, for example, the entertainment industry at large. The characters and stories we see in so much of what's sometimes called mainstream media aren't necessarily relevant to many, and maybe most, Muslims.

That sounds like work you're doing involves quite a bit of responsibility, doesn't it?

Technology is one of many ways the Muslim community can be empowered. It's a powerful tool for inclusivity and visibility, after all. But like any tool, it depends on how you wield it and what you wield it for. We are responsible for ensuring that our users are heard, represented, and reflected in ways that are meaningful, substantive, respectful—and powerful. Our new media and entertainment service will develop content and storylines that connect with Muslim audiences and concerns.

It will be content that can move them, provoke them, inspire them, and engage them, but without undermining their deepest beliefs and core commitments; we are setting out content with a purpose.

Responsibility is a theme that runs throughout your work. It also brings us to the elephant in the room. Muslim Pro, and Bitsmedia, received a lot of press attention

with an unfortunate data sharing incident back in 2020. Tell us more about that.

I remember it like it was yesterday. We were just as shocked and angry as anyone else when we first read that one of our data partners was allegedly selling our users' location data to the US military.

As a Muslim, I sadly understand and empathize with the fear of being policed or scrutinized, although I could only imagine what our users actually living through that may have felt when the news broke. That's why we took immediate action to terminate our relationship with all data partners straight away after learning about the allegations to ensure that our users could have a peace of mind when using our app.

We never share non-anonymized data (such as names or contact details) and continue to strictly follow all industry-standard guidelines to protect our users' data. Additionally, the basic features of the Muslim Pro app are available without signing up or logging in. This means we require little to no data for processing. Nevertheless, we decided to go that extra mile, and implement a more robust approach to secure all our data. Soon after the allegations were raised, we engaged and were audited by a major cybersecurity organization and continue to have regular audits of our systems.

We have always complied with global data privacy laws and regulations, but clearly more needed to be done. More still needs to be done. We in the tech industry need to work together to create a standard for privacy and protection, so we can ensure this doesn't happen again. We've talked with our peers about regulatory bodies and certifications, but it will take some time for the industry to agree on and implement a solution. I'm hoping it's sooner rather than later. That said, it's always something we'll consistently work towards, push for, and advocate on behalf of.

What would you say about the issue of

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**Cont. from page 1.
First Time In 30 Years**

The overlap of the three observances occurs about every 33 years, according to Lees McCrae College. Religious groups and others use the rare occasion to call for harmony between the traditions.

“As Passover, Easter, and Ramadan converge this weekend, we pray for peace and tranquility in Israel, in the United States, and around the world,” the American Jewish Committee said in a tweet.

Nuns at Church of the Holy Sepulchre

The coincidence is so uncommon because the three observances are based on different calendars and factors that determine when the holidays occur. Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox. Good Friday marks the crucifixion of Jesus, God’s messiah, under the Roman governor of Judea to atone for humanity’s sins.

Passover occurs in the middle of Nisan, a month in the Hebrew calendar, on the first full moon, putting it in proximity

to Easter. The holiday begins at sundown and includes seder, a special meal meant to remind Jewish people of the hardship they endured in Egypt.

Ramadan is Islam’s holiest month using the lunar calendar. Because the calendar follows the cycles of the moon, unlike the Gregorian calendar commonly used in the West, Ramadan falls on different times each year.

During Ramadan, Muslims believe God revealed the sacred text of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad, the first verses of which were passed

down on “The Night of Power” (Laylat al-Qadr in Arabic). Muslims abstain from food or drink from dawn to sunset for the entire month and are encouraged to contemplate their relationship with God.

The American Islamic College in Chicago announced it will mark the overlap of the holidays by organizing an interfaith trolley next week to visit various faith-based organizations. The event will also recognize Baha’i, Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist holidays.

However, on Friday more than 150 people were

injured after Israeli security forces clashed with Palestinians in Jerusalem.

“My heart is full of pain this morning as I watch the scenes coming out of Jerusalem,” Mustafa Farooq, CEO of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, said on Twitter. “As I know our shared communities are celebrating Passover, Ramadan, and Good Friday, if there is one thing that gives me hope, it’s that my friends in every community want peace.”

**Cont. from page 13.
Technology Can Help
Muslims Reconnect**

trust for Muslim Pro users?

Trust is something that needs to be built, and more importantly, it is something that brands have to continuously work on. Even when all is well and good, trust cannot be taken for granted and we learnt that the hard way. For us, having the Muslim community represented and empowered by our products remains our number one priority. For us to be able to do that best, we need to work with our users—not only responding to their needs as service providers, but to also share in their concerns and experiences as allies. The steps we took after the incident, and everything after, are made with that in mind.

By opening the lines of communications with our users, we can make our relationship with them stronger than ever and we will strive to ensure that our proximity with our community of users is never too far.

Coming back to Muslim Pro’s lifestyle brand. There has been a surge of Muslim-centric lifestyle services in recent years, so what makes this unique?

Our greatest strength is how adaptable Muslim Pro has proven to be. As we work towards growing Muslim Pro’s faith-based features through initiatives like Ramadan Reconnect and Streak

Rewards, we will also ensure that we never lose sight of the big picture and our purpose as a brand and company.

We recognize that there’s a great deal of demand, especially among young Muslims, for content that is truly reflective of who they are and how they live. Although we started out with more spiritually-oriented content, we have been able to easily branch out to lifestyle services. Because faith remains a core component of Muslim Pro.

Everything we’re currently developing, whether it involves entertainment, food, or socializing, revolves around our adherence to our deen. Tech is a vital part of the modern Muslim’s lifestyle, but it isn’t the foundation. It’s a means, not an end. The end, of course, is what we believe in, who we want to be, what kind of people we want to grow into.

Where does one start when coming up with a new tech service? What goes on the drawing board? Where do you get inspiration?

First, as with all offerings, there is a need to look at the problem statement. What that means for us is looking into what our Muslim community needs that is not being met. That’s always the underlying question. We have to be really intimately acquainted with the community. At the end of the day, working in religious tech means what you provide will have emotional and spiritual value to your

users.

Then comes the fun part: We sit down with the department, and ask ourselves “what makes this new and unique? What would get our users excited to use it?” It’s a pretty surreal experience, because everyone from our market research team to the engineers gets to be a part of this very community-oriented process. We all know that we have a job at hand, but also a responsibility.

How do you navigate differences in Muslim understandings and practices? Those can be very challenging and sensitive realities.

Diversity in views and thoughts within Islam is apparent. For instance, we do need to be mindful that there are pockets of the community that are told using technology as an accompaniment to faith isn’t permissible. I respect that, even if I don’t agree with that. At the end of the day, it is important to understand that Islam is not a monolith and there is a diverse range of thoughts, positions, and jurisdictions within Islam and no one product or service can meet all those needs or expectations. Also, our position has never been about force. We simply focus on providing the best product, service, and experience to those who see value in what we are striving for. If anything, we just hope that people are able to see what we do—and, more importantly, to see why we do what we do. Through Muslim Pro and Bitsmedia, we are part of a

really promising movement that is using tech to enhance faith.

Because tech can make you a stronger, better, more empowered Muslim. We’ve seen it and heard it time and again through feedback and reviews from our community – our app, Muslim Pro, gives our users real encouragement to work on their daily ibadah. It gives them solace in tough times through the words of the Qur’an and our blessed Prophet (PBUH). And that inspires the new products we’re planning.

With our upcoming new product and service that provides a platform for wholesome Muslim entertainment, I know that there’ll be something for everyone. From content that tells the stories of our community, to documentaries detailing our history – our ummah is a beautiful blend of cultures, ideas, and values, and we want to capture it all.

With technology, we can. We hope to connect the global Muslim communities and bring it right to you in your pocket.

We see ourselves as a big part of the Muslim digital ecosystem, and the sky’s the limit as to what we can accomplish with our partners and customers. There are so many ways to interface.

Where do you see Muslim Pro going in five years’ time?

There is so much potential for growth, it’s almost daunting. Almost two billion Muslims, and we haven’t even

scratched the surface yet! So let me just say this.

I definitely see Muslim Pro catering to more and more elements of a full, rich, and meaningful Muslim life. We want to be there for all of your faith. We want to help you connect to your heritage, identity, values—and we want to help you move confidently into your future.

What I mean is, there’s still a lot left to explore by way of communities and cultures, and it’s a learning process for us.

The more we learn about our Muslim community, the more creative and innovative we become, and the more we can incorporate into our brands under Bitsmedia. Fara and I have the highest hopes for Muslim tech and entertainment—about creating content that’s good for Muslims, and content that helps bring Muslim voices and perspectives into all kinds of other conversations, even ones that aren’t used to Muslim voices and perspectives.

And if we at Bitsmedia can play a part in that, it would be a huge win, inshaAllah!

If you want to write for TMO, Please email: editor@muslimobserver.com



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“ AFMI's School Under Construction in Islam Gunj, Gaya, Bihar”

Last two years were very tough for people around the world because of the pandemic. It is still affecting many, especially the unprivileged people in India. AFMI has continued its mission to provide shelter, clothes, food packages, clean water, medicines and oxygen concentrators to families affected by the pandemic.

Our main mission this year is to provide education to the children who fell behind in education due to pandemic and financial distress. Because of poverty, many young children are illiterate, and that illiteracy further breeds more poverty in the next generations. We strongly need your support for these children.

AFMI has started construction for a primary school in Islam Gunj, Gaya Bihar, India. Construction will be completed before Eid 2022 and we are hoping to start classes for our first batch after Eid, Insha Allah. Please donate your zakat and sadqa to provide quality education to these unprivileged children to start their education with a CBSE (English Medium) curriculum. Your donation will benefit them greatly in providing them a bright future.

Donate online: www.afmi.org
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