



White House Once Again Celebrates Eid

By: M Muhammad Ahmed

U.S. President Joseph Biden invited almost 200 American Muslim leaders and organizers to the White House for an Eid ceremony on Eid Day, May 2. During the event, the president recognized the importance of the American Muslim community, pointing out their contributions to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and being active parts of their communities.

In his remarks, he said, “Muslims make our nation stronger every single day, even as they still face real challenges and threats in our society, including targeted violence and Islamophobia.”



President Biden emphasized his administration’s commitment to religious freedom and inclusion. He cited his nominations of the first Muslim American to be appointed to the

federal bench, the new Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, and numerous other appointments to important positions tackling economic development, health care and

national security. Muslim guests attending the White House Ceremony came from across the country. Arooj Aftab, the Pakistani Grammy

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Antivaxxers Protest, Fauci Page. 11

Joe Biden Responds To ‘Leaked’ SCOTUS Opinion, Says Abortion Rights Are ‘Fundamental

By: Aysha Qamar

President Joe Biden has issued a statement emphasizing his commitment to keeping abortion accessible following the release of an alleged leaked draft opinion by Politico that states the Supreme Court has voted to overturn abortion rights.



In the statement issued Tuesday, Biden noted that a women’s right to an abortion is a “fundamental.” He added that: “Roe has been the law of the land for almost fifty

years, and basic fairness and the stability of our law demand that it not be overturned.” Biden did also question the legitimacy of the

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The Kashmir Files: Myth Or Reality- Part 1 Of 4



by Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai

‘Early reviews in the Indian media had found the film deeply Islamophobic, dishonest, and a provocation.’ Sanjay

Kak, Kashmiri Pandit filmmaker and writer

This movie feeds into cycles of hate and revenge. It collapses Kashmir’s

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# A Delawarean At The London Book Fair



by Dr. Muqtedar Khan

Do beautiful things, God loves those who do beautiful things (Quran 2:195).

I trudged up the stairs, there were 44 of them, promising myself I would hit the gym as soon as Ramadan was over. When I reached the top and turned around to look down the vast exhibition hall, my heart filled with joy as I saw an ocean of books, booksellers, book buyers, book publishers, writers, and readers. This was the London Book Fair, from April 5-7, 2022 at the Olympia convention center. This is the biggest book fair in the world. This is where stories meet storytellers. I was here for the launch of the MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) edition of my book *Islam and Good Governance: A Political Philosophy of Ihsan*.

My book is essentially about the role of values in good governance. It mines the Islamic mystical concept of Ihsan to envision a virtuous form of governance based on principles of compassion, virtue, aesthetics, and knowledge; all within the framework of a democratic state and a spiritual civil society. While Ihsan is the organizing principle of this model, it also draws on the constitution of Medina drafted by Prophet Muhammad may peace and blessings be upon him.

Ihsan in its simplest form means to do beautiful things. In its mystical form it means to worship or serve God as if you see him, and if you cannot see him then to at least know that he sees you. The idea is that one has reached the mystical state wherein both God and the worshipper are witnessing each other. When one is in this state it is like a drop of water meets the ocean.

For some, the ocean consumes the drop but for the mystic, the drop consumes the ocean. In this state there are no two entities, there is only One. This is the goal of Ihsan, to become one with The One, through a process of self-annihilation known as Fanaa.

I argue in my book that in a world of heightened identity politics of race, gender, religion, and sexuality, where differences are more critical than commonalities, culture and societies tend to become more contentious and dysfunctional. One way to promote a more harmonious society is to build on commonalities or shared futures. But the first one must exercise some Fanaa, some self-negation. Especially the most privileged in the society must give a little more and take a little less. It is this vector of the book that has appealed to the Muslim Council of Elders based in Abu Dhabi and led them to relaunch my book in the MENA region and translate it into Arabic. The Arabic translation will, inshallah, be available soon. This is the best Ramadan gift I ever received.

The Council of Muslim Elders, an international NGO, based in Abu Dhabi is composed of the most eminent scholars of Islam from several countries and is under the guidance of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayyeb. Its goal is to promote coexistence and harmony everywhere. The Council has launched an initiative called Publishing for Peace and Coexistence with the aim to publish and translate 10 books in various languages that promote tolerance and human fraternity. I am happy that my book has been selected as the first of these books. It is an honor for me and for the book.

The council also organized a panel at the fair on how to combat hate speech and promote co-existence. The panelists included Baroness Uddin a prominent social activist, a peer and member of the House of Lords, Canon Sarah Snyder who is Archbishop of Canterbury's advisor for reconciliation, and yours truly. The Baroness spoke on the role of social activism in combating hate, Canon Snyder spoke about the role of faith in promoting reconciliation and I spoke about the role of education and the struggle for diversity and inclusion on American university campuses.

Later, thanks to the Baroness I was able to visit the British parliament and attend a debate in the main hall. It was an interesting experience. The main hall is a bit ostentatious but also a work of art. The attention to detail and investment in the craftsmanship of the hall and the royal gallery tell us what this institution means to the British people. I took half a day off and visited Stonehenge. To me, its mystique is both awe-inspiring and spiritual. While in London I was able to attend an Iftar — breaking of fast in Ramadan — ceremony and prayers at the famous Regents Park Mosque in central London. It's very diverse congregation is a microcosm of London and a good example of racial, ethnic, and sectarian coexistence.

All three sacred places reminded me that Ihsan, the desire to do something beautiful, is a human instinct. People have always done beautiful things and will continue to do so.

Dr. Muqtedar Khan is a professor at the University of Delaware and hosts a YouTube show called Khanversations.

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## Pakistan In Debt



**By Mahvish Akhtar**

The new Pakistani government's official visit to the Middle East has been highly fruitful. They managed to secure an \$8 billion package from Saudi Arabia. Pakistan proposed doubling the oil finance facility from \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia agreed, according to an official. The purpose of an oil facility is to prepare the oil for sale to the client's satisfaction.

Additional money would be deposited through Sukuks (Sukuk is similar to a bond in western financing; however, it complies with the Islamic way of financing); it was also agreed between the two countries that the existing deposits of \$3 billion would be rolled over for a period extending up to June 2023.

"Pakistan and KSA discussed an additional package of over \$2 billion either through deposits or Sukuk, and even more money will likely be provided to Islamabad," said official sources, adding that the size of the total package would be determined when additional money was finalized. Saudi Arabia had provided \$3 billion deposits to the State Bank of Pakistan in December 2021, while the Saudi oil facility first became op-

erational in March 2022, whereby Pakistan was provided \$100 million to procure oil.

Saudi Arabia had provided a \$7.5 billion package last time PML-N was in government under Prime Minister Shehbaz's older Brother, Mr. Nawaz Sharif. Under the PTI-led regime, Saudi Arabia had provided a package of \$4.2 billion, including \$3 billion deposits and a \$1.2 billion oil facility for one year, and linked it with the IMF program.

The revival of the IMF program is considered imperative because the gross external financing requirement is estimated to be around \$35 billion during the next fiscal year 2022-23. Without the program's backing, this huge financing gap cannot be bridged. There are economists, however, who feel it is not an entirely lost cause. In their opinion measures can be taken to help this situation. Dr. Ashfaq Hasan Khan, a Ph.D. in economics from John Hopkins University and the Principal and Dean of Social Science & Humanities at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) is one of them.

In Dr. Khan's words, "The government and other stakeholders gave Pakistan 14 billion

dollars. But we had a leaking bucket. On one side, the money was coming in; on the other side. The money was going to importing luxury goods. That was the greatest mistake we committed. When money started coming in from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and China, we could have built our reserves, but we wasted them. On one side, the reserve was being built; on the other side, luxury imports such as chocolates, cell phones, 3000cc cars, etc. were coming into the country."

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has provided Pakistan with \$4.2 billion of support in the form of a \$3 billion loan deposited with the central

bank and \$1.2 billion in deferred oil payments to boost its foreign reserves. The cash-strapped nation's foreign exchange reserves plunged below \$11 billion last month.

Pakistan has sought an increase in the size and duration of its \$6 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) program, the country's finance minister, Mr. Miftah Ismail, has said. "I've requested the fund, and I think they have, largely, they've agreed to extend this program for another one year," he said. "I've also requested that they enhance the funding available to Pakistan from \$6 billion under this program to perhaps a little bit more."

The details will be de-

cided when the mission comes to Pakistan in May, he said.

Ismail commented in a video statement on Monday following talks with the IMF in Washington. It came after the fund said Islamabad has agreed to roll back subsidies to the oil and power sectors ahead of a resumption next month of reviewing the IMF's support for the country.

Saudi Arabia also pledged "to further enhance the financing of petroleum products" this is coming at a time when Pakistan is suffering from widespread power cuts.



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# Lawmakers Seek Conditioning Of Aid To Tunisia Citing Concerns About Rule Of Law

by Yousuf Ali

Several U.S. Lawmakers wrote to President Joe Biden to conditioning aid to Tunisia, on April 27. This is in the aftermath of the country's president Kais Saied suspending the parliamentary powers. According to Al Jazeera, "In a letter addressed to the top members of the US House of Representatives panel that allocates funds to the Department of State, US legislators have urged Washington to condition parts of the US's security assistance package to Tunis.

The letter, a draft of which was shared with Al Jazeera, had garnered 12 signatures from House members including Tom Malinowski, who helped lead the effort, Joe Wilson, Adam Schiff, Ro Khanna, Rashida Tlaib, and Ilhan Omar. The letter accused Saied of a power grab since July 25, 2021. Before this, Tunisia had



an elected legislative assembly. The letter specifically targets security assistance which could be used as weapons for the government to use against dissenters. Since then, Saied has escalated the situation further leading to even more concerns.

Last week, Saied further consolidated his power at the expense of democratically elected

institutions. According to Al Jazeera, "Last week, Saied also seized control of Tunisia's electoral commission and restructured it in a decree that raised fresh concerns about the integrity of future elections, including a July referendum on a new constitution.

The U.S. State Department said it was "deeply concerned" about the decision. "A genuinely

independent election authority is critical, given its constitutionally mandated role in Tunisia's upcoming referendum and parliamentary elections," spokesperson Ned Price told reporters. "The United States has consistently communicated to Tunisian leaders the importance of upholding the independence of key democratic institutions and ensur-

ing Tunisia returns to democratic governance." The Tunisian embassy in Washington, DC did not immediately respond to Al Jazeera's request for comment on Wednesday afternoon." The letter also cited Biden's own rhetoric to strengthen democracy with this being a good opportunity to help a fledgling democracy get back on its feet.

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# 16 Killed In Attack On Shi’a Mosque In Afghanistan

By TMO Staff

On Thursday, April 21, 2022, there was an attack on a Shia Muslim mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif where more than 31 people were killed in a blast. This was likely targetting them because of their sectarian and ethnic background. The victims came from the Hazara minority in Afghanistan which is predominantly Shia and has endured persecution from the

Pasthtu and Sunni majority population of Afghanistan

According to the BBC, this attack was followed by another: “A bomb attack on a Sunni mosque in the city of Kunduz in Afghanistan has killed 33 people and injured 43 others, including children, officials say. The attack on the Mawlawi Sekandar Sufi mosque is the second in as many days in the northern city. It follows four attacks across Afghanistan on



Thursday – all claimed by the Islamic State group (IS).” Despite this, the trend is a decrease in the frequency of attacks since the Taliban took over in August. The attacks seem to have targeted Sufi and Shia sites. Responsibility was claimed by the ISIL group or ISIS. Government officials

have tried to explain the causes and give assurances of accountability and redress. According to Al Jazeera, “Taliban officials insist their forces have defeated ISIL, but analysts have said the group remains a key security challenge. Richard Bennett, the UN’s Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan on human

rights, condemned the attacks. “Today, more explosions rocks Afghanistan ... Systematic targeted attacks on crowded schools and mosques calls for immediate investigation, accountability, and end to such human rights violations,” he said in a tweet.” Even though the Taliban may have

taken over they still have to deal with opposition to their rule as well as general terrorism from those loyal to ISIL. Additionally, these attacks come during Ramadan where people are increasing their worship and congregating to mosques, likely increasing the severity of attacks.



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# Beyond The Numbers: Lessons Learned From The French Elections

by Saeed Khan

The French elections concluded with less drama than the buildup appeared to promise. Incumbent Emmanuel Macron captured nearly 59% of the vote in the run-off against Marine Le Pen to gain another term as President. While an 18-point margin would certainly be regarded as a landslide win (usually, anything more than a 5-point spread is regarded as a landslide), Macron's victory is hardly the definitive statement the statistics might suggest. It also does nothing to allay concerns that the right-wing agenda has been sufficiently vanquished; in fact, there is every indication that France may lurch further to the right despite the return of a left-leaning party to the Élysée Palace.

By all accounts, Macron's "decisive" showing at the polls is a sigh of relief for repelling the forces of the far-right from seizing power in Europe's second-largest country. Le Pen inherited the National Party (previously the National Front) in 2011 from her father, Jean-Marie. She has made a career of espousing anti-immigrant, Islamophobic and right-wing populism. She has called for banning the Muslim headscarf in public places, as well as the deportation of any foreigners and undocumented people convicted of a crime. Despite some last-minute campaign trail efforts to strike a softer, less bigoted, more presentable (electable?) tone, Le Pen's reputation clearly preceded her among those she was hoping to reach beyond her already a sizable base of a mostly rural, white French population. Her persistent, enthusiastic support for Vladimir Putin did not help her at a time when the Russian President is the most hated man on the planet for his brutal invasion of Ukraine.

Despite Le Pen's faltering, Macron is in no posi-



tion to claim a mandate, per se. The abstention rate among voters exceeded 28%, an increase since the last elections of 2017. It suggests that his term in office has proven to be highly unpopular among a large part of the French electorate, with the hemorrhag-

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# Itikaf: Once In A Lifetime Opportunity To Remind Oneself Of One's Reality



by **Dr. Aslam Abdullah**

Itikaf means withholding oneself from the regular exercise of freedom of action in the disposal, or management, of affairs. When a person secludes himself or herself in a place of worship and performs a particular sort of religious service with the observance of a certain condition for 24 hours including prayers and religious meditation and reflection without leaving the premises except for human necessity, he or she is considered to be in a state of Itikaf.

People in a state of Itikaf spend time in seclusion to reflect and ponder over their purpose in life to achieve a higher stage of spirituality. Through their contemplation and reflection on the purpose of their existence, they believe that they may offer new and better perspectives to them and their fellow humans.

The Quran uses the word Aakifeen (people who are in a state of meditation and prayers) in three different verses

“AND LO! We made the House of Worship a goal to which people might repair again and again, and a sanctuary: take then, the place whereon Abraham once stood as your place of prayer.” And thus did We command Abraham and Ishmael: “Purify My House

for those who will walk around it, and those who will abide near it in meditation, and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves [in prayer].”

[But] they answered: “By no means shall we cease to worship it until Moses comes back to us!” 2(0:91) They answered: We worship idols, and we remain ever devoted to them.” (26:71)

In the first verse, Aakifeen is about those who would abide near the station of Abraham in the Kaaba. In the second verse, it refers to worshipers in general and in the third verse it refers to devotees to idols.

Much of our understanding of Itikaf comes from Hadith literature.

Muslims institutionalized I'tikaf in the month of fasting through the practice of Prophet Muhammad. It is a communal obligation, and it means that if the only one person observes it in a locality, it would be regarded as an obligation fulfilled on behalf of all.

The fasting was declared obligatory for the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar in the second year of Prophet's migration to Medina or in the fifteenth year of his Prophetic mission. Except for the first year of fasting, the Prophet is reported to have ob-

served i'tikaf as long as he lived. That means he observed Itikaf in seven Ramadan. He made Itikaf for 10 days for six years and in the seventh, he prolonged it for 20 days.

He was not the only one in a state of Itikaf. His closest companions and others also joined him. His wives also observed this practice during his lifetime and after him as well.

Itikaf is performed by those who are fasting. Both men and women did their I'tikaf during the time of the Prophet. At Prophet's mosque, special arrangements were made for women following this practice of the Prophet.

During the Itikaf a person doing itikaf should spend the night only in the mosque where he/she is doing itikaf, except if the tent is in one of the courtyards of the mosque. If the masjid does not have toilet facilities than the person doing itikaf can go home to relieve.

The person who wants to have itikaf should enter the masjid before the sunset with a clear intention. During his stay, his focus should not be his family, business or work. However, he can delegate others to take care of these matters in his absence. If due to

some unavoidable situation one has to abandon the i'tikaf for intended days, he or she has to complete it later. Itikaf is an act of ibada (worship) and it must be performed with full sincerity and intensity.

Imam Malik said: “A person doing itikaf is not doing itikaf until he avoids what someone doing itikaf should avoid, namely, visiting the sick, praying over the dead, and entering houses, except to relieve himself.”

The best practice is to absorb oneself in prayers and recitation of the Quran reflecting on its meaning and relevance in one's life. The prophet in addition to doing this would also use the opportunity to reflect on the condition of Muslims and would discuss strategies to improve the quality of spiritual and social life. Four things are proven from the practice of the Prophet during itikaf.

Consuming less food  
Sleeping less number of hours

Lesser engagement in conversation.

Lesser social interaction.

Instead, he would focus on the following five acts

Prayers

Quranic recitation of the passages that were revealed until then

Deeper reflections on the divine guidance of the existence of life

Quietly helping others observing the i'tikaf.

Reflecting on the condition of his people and discussing strategies to improve their living conditions with his companions

Itikaf is once a lifetime opportunity to focus on one's life and the purpose of the creator and His creation.

Can we have Itikaf at home during this Coronavirus lockdown? Unusual situations open unusual avenues. If one can keep oneself free from the routine life at home and seclude from family life and focus on observing the way he or she would have observed in a Masjid, then one can have precedence of observing itikaf at home. After all, the entire earth is considered a Masjid by Allah's apostle. However, if the conditions change during the itikaf and the lockdown is lifted, the person should move to the masjid to complete the remaining days. One hopes that jurists will look at this issue and come up with an alternative understanding of this practice that has now become a part of Ramadan ritual.



# New Report: 1 In 5 Americans ‘Partly’ Blame Asian Americans For The Spread Of COVID-19



by Rehan Qamar

The number of biased crimes against the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community continues to increase nationwide. Several data reports have indicated an alarming surge across the country, with some major cities seeing over a 100% increase in AAPI targeted hate crimes.

While crimes against the AAPI community are not a new phenomenon, a surge in targeted attacks has been connected to the spread of COVID-19 misinformation. A new report released Wednesday indicates that Americans continue to wrongfully accuse Asian Americans of the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S. As a result, distrust of the AAPI community has increased.

According to the report released by nonprofits Leading Asian Americans to Unite for Change (LAAUNCH) and The Asian American Foundation (TAAF), 21% of U.S. adults now say Asian Americans are at least partly responsible for COVID-19.

Despite the increasing awareness around using the right language towards the coronavirus and how Asian Americans are being infected, people are still distrustful toward the AAPI community. What's shocking is that the distrust has increased in the last few years, even further than when the pandemic first started. The new report indicates there has been an 11% increase in those who at least partly blame those of Asian descent in 2022 compared to data obtained in 2021.

Additionally, the report noted that 33% said they believe "Asian Americans are more loyal to their country of origin than to the United States"—that is a 20% increase from last year.

"It does stem from the perpetual foreigner myth that Asians and Asian Americans, no matter if you're born here or not, you're always seen as just from your country of origin," said Eric Toda, a board member of TAAF and LAAUNCH, told NBC News.

While 71% of Asian American respondents



noted that they are discriminated against, only 29% said they feel accepted in the country. According to the report, that was the lowest percentage of all racial groups surveyed.

"On the surface, we thought it was COVID and Trump. Deeper down we know it's related to the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotypes. But even deeper, it really [shows] the embedded systemic racism in this country against Asian Americans," TAAF CEO and LAAUNCH Co-founder Norman Chen told Axios

Today.

According to LAAUNCH, results were gathered online from 5,113 adults in the U.S. between February 10 and 28, with a 1.4% margin of error and a 95% confidence level.

Despite the lack of recognition of the hate the Asian American community has been facing recently, more than 70% of all respondents said it's essential to combat anti-Asian racism. Researchers also said that the findings indicate a need for more education about Asian Americans.

Despite the number of

those who expressed distrust in the AAPI community, more than 70% of respondents agreed it is essential to combat anti-Asian hate. Researchers also noted that the findings indicated a need for more education about the AAPI community, including Asian American history and prominent individuals.

"I think education and representation go hand in hand in creating more empathy and more perspective," Toda told NBC News.





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# Antivaxxers Protest Outside As Anthony Fauci Delivers Applaudable Graduation Speech At U Of M



By: TMO Staff

Across the country, several thousand university students were unable to commemorate their graduations over the past two years due to the coronavirus pandemic. While their graduations were severely delayed, the University of Michigan’s class of 2020 students—who didn’t have a traditional commencement ceremony—were in for a treat this weekend: They had the country’s top disease expert deliver their graduation speech.

Students applauded and smiled as Anthony Fauci, medical adviser to President Joe Biden and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), entered the stadium. Class of 2020 graduates and some 2021 graduates were in attendance for the “Comeback Commencement” ceremony on May 7, The Detroit News reported.

During his speech, Fauci advised students to approach life expecting the unexpected.

He used examples of his own life to speak about HIV and rare cancers in men being detected across the country.

“You will confront the same types of unpredictable events that I have

experienced, regardless of what directions your careers and lives take,” Fauci said. “So, expect the unexpected, and stay heads up for an unanticipated opportunity should it present itself.”

He then dove into the country’s issue of divided politics, emphasizing the importance of seeking the truth. He expressed his concern for the spread of misinformation and asked students to challenge what he called the “normalization of untruths.”

“If you remember nothing else from what I say today, I truly appeal to you, please remember this: It is our collective responsibility not to sink to a tacit acceptance of the normalization of untruths, because if we do, we bring danger to ourselves, our families, and our communities,” he said.

“This is how a society devolves into a way of life where veracity becomes subservient to propaganda rather than upheld as a guiding principle for creating and sustaining a just social order.”

Of course, Fauci’s speech could not be completed without applauding the students whose lives were severely impacted by the pandemic.

“Each of you deserves enormous credit and respect, and I mean that, for your extraordinary adaptability, your resilience, your dedication to learning, completing your studies, and graduating despite immense difficulties in uncertainties,” Fauci said. “And I say with all sincerity that I am in awe of you for that.”

According to the university, approximately 4,100 graduates RSVP’d for the event.

rallied outside the stadium where Fauci spoke. They held signs blasting Fauci and COVID-19 vaccines that read “Fauci killed my mom,” “Arrest Fauci now!” and “Fauci = Dr. Death.”

Among them was former Republican state Sen. Patrick Colbeck. Colbeck ran for governor in 2018 and has also pushed Trump’s theories about a stolen 2020 election—theories that have been debunked. With his wife, he decried the legitimacy

commencement address because of the policies that he promoted,” Colbeck said.

He also claimed that as a former University of Michigan student he was taught to be “rational.” “We approach things from an objective perspective. And [Fauci’s] the exact antithesis of all of that,” he said. “It’s a mockery of everything that’s on my diploma, frankly.”

According to the Advance, the protest was



Ross Jones @rossjonesWXYZ



Dr. Anthony Fauci is greeted by deafening applause at @UMich's graduation ceremony, delayed two years by the pandemic he has fought.

Prior to his address, Fauci was presented with an honorary Doctor of Science degree and received a loud ovation from the crowd inside the stadium, but of course not everyone attending the ceremony Saturday was happy. According to Detroit Free Press, a couple of dozen protestors

of vaccines.

In conversation with the Michigan Advance Colbeck said that having Fauci speak at the commencement was a “horrible decision” and a “slap in the face” to the 2020 graduates.

“These kids ... have been denied their original

organized on Facebook, partially by Lena Epstein, a Republican candidate for the University of Michigan Board of Regents. Epstein, who unsuccessfully ran for Congress in 2018, also boosts conspiracy theories.



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**Cont. from page 1.  
Kashmir Files**

history and politics into an Islamophobic morality tale that is palatable and profitable to Hindutva India. Dr. Nitasha Kaul, Kashmiri Pandit novelist and academic.

“The Kashmir Files” written by Vivek Agnihotri is an Indian film which was released on March 11, 2022. The focus of the film is the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus (Pandits) in Jammu & Kashmir. The conclusion of the film is that 1990 exodus of Kashmiri Pandits was a genocide.

Among the many harms of the film is the intimate wrong it does to people from the Kashmir Valley. Both Muslims and Pandits bear the scars of conflict. Both communities need to share painful histories to get past them. These histories are not always of mutual recrimination but also of friendships and a common way of life lost in the armed conflict. The Kashmir Files seems to close off the possibility of a space where such longing may be expressed.

Is ‘The Kashmir Files’ myth or reality? The discourse needs to be supplemented with facts and figures.

But before presenting my personal observations, let me put forth the analysis of some prominent Pandits (Kashmiri Hindus) and Indian scholars.

Sanjay Kak, an eminent and celebrated documentary filmmaker, and writer but more importantly a Kashmiri Pandit himself who wrote an opinion piece in Al-Jazeera under the heading, ‘THE DANGEROUS ‘TRUTH’ OF THE KASHMIR FILES’ on April 14, 2022. He said that ‘early reviews in the Indian media had found the film deeply Islamophobic, dishonest, and a provocation.’

Sanjay Kak said that as a documentary filmmaker and writer whose work has centred on Kashmir for almost two decades, I have always been confounded by the facts – or the lack of them – of the departure of the community in 1990. My community, I should say, for, I am a Kashmiri Pandit. There is little clarity

about even the most elementary things. We also know that early in 1990 some Kashmiri Pandit families began to flee in fear. Their leaving was probably intended as a temporary move though it was to prove tragically permanent for most. We also know that despite all this, at least 4,000 Kashmiri Pandit families never left their homes. They have continued to live in Kashmir, not in secure ghettos, but scattered across the valley. Living in what often feels like a war zone, without extended networks of family and community, their lives are not easy. But nor is life easy for their Muslim neighbours, with whom they live in what has come to be recognised as one of the most militarised zones in the world.

The simplest questions fail to yield reliable answers, Kak warned. How many Kashmiri Pandits lived in the valley prior to 1990? The figures conjured up by the right-wing fluctuate between 500,000 and 700,000, although considered estimates place it at about 170,000. How many of them left the Kashmir Valley after 1990? A recent response by the region’s Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner placed the figure at 135,426, although on inflamed television debates the needle again fluctuates between 500,00 and 700,000 and can inexplicably go up to a million.

Ipsita Chakraverty, an Indian artist, writer and activist wrote in Scroll.in, on March 19, 2022, “As for the numbers displaced, researcher Alexander Evans suggests there were 160,000-170,000 Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley in 1990, most of whom fled in the violence. Other scholars claim the numbers were lower. The Jammu and Kashmir government’s website says 60,000 Kashmiri Hindu families migrated out of the Valley during the violence, which still does not match the five lakh figure.

Sanjay Kak explained, “This is a film that brutalises its audience with scenes of such extreme violence that it eventual-

ly silences the possibility of considering alternative narratives that we know to be true. I could think of few: although terrible tragedies did happen to many individuals, most Kashmiri Pandit families were not betrayed by their Muslim neighbours. While some properties were torched and destroyed, most temples and homes were not ransacked or looted, and many more have run to ruin over years of neglect. Most critically, this myopic narrative succeeds in obscuring the fact that what happened in Kashmir in the 1990s was not centrally a conflict between Muslims and Hindus. It was an uprising against the Indian state.”

Eventually, ‘The Kashmir Files’ is not about setting straight a historical record of Kashmir in the 1990s or creating an environment that might ease the return home of a community in exile. Its narrative is instead powered by a visceral demonisation of the Kashmiri Muslim, one that renders reconciliation ever more difficult. And by connecting the return of the Kashmiri Pandit to the dream of a glorious ancient past, a political project that elides Kashmir’s complicated history of 700 years, it seeds the idea of a return to a Hindu homeland. This is an idea that is redolent with implications of dispossession and settlement. That is what makes its “truth” dangerous, Sanjay Kak concluded.

Ipsita Chakraverty echoed the same sentiments by writing that each death is a tragedy. Each instance of forced migration is a wound. But the film appears to deliberately exaggerate numbers to paint not just militants but all Kashmiri Muslims as a hostile people who colluded en masse in the persecution of their Pandit neighbors.

Dr Nitasha Kaul, novelist, poet, academic and a Kashmiri Pandit wrote an opinion in ‘The News Minute’ under the heading, “Kashmir is not a file: Propaganda and politics in India” on March 24, 2022. She said that this movie can show ‘Free Kashmir’ banners and refer to the plebiscite

on Kashmir as a condition of accession that was never carried out – in order to debunk these things – but anyone else in real life who dares to seriously discuss these very things publicly in India risks being imprisoned or charged with sedition.

Dr. Kaul added that the movie dwells on Kashmiri Pandit suffering alone and makes ample use of Islamophobic tropes – all Muslims in the movie are violent, barbaric or lecherous or devious or vile.

This movie feeds into cycles of hate and revenge, Dr. Kaul warned. It collapses Kashmir’s history and politics into an Islamophobic morality tale that is palatable and profitable to Hindutva India. It should offend all Indians, Hindus, Muslims, Kashmiri Muslims, men, women, and others who have ever cared for humanity across religious lines.

Ajit Singh, an Indian educationist wrote an Op-Ed in ‘Brown Girl Magazine’ entitled, ‘The Kashmir Files – Fabricates the Truth to Demonize Muslims’ on March 24, 2022. He said as far as Kashmiri Pandits are concerned, they have every right to present their version of the story, but they didn’t need to hire an amoral sycophant who won’t shy away from using every nasty trick in the fascist playbook to create irreparable fault lines that will ultimately help the incumbent political party to dismantle democracy in the garb of portraying the true accounts of victims.

“The Kashmir Files” Ajit Singh explained, has tried to justify the unilateral actions of the government, one of them being the unconstitutional abrogation of Article 370 that really had nothing to do with the exodus of Pandits. A film that is stuffed with nefarious ulterior motives and propagates malice against people from particular sections cannot be made to stand in the line of worthy contenders that could represent India on prestigious international platforms.

“I don’t think that the makers of this film want

them (Kashmiri Pandits) to return to Kashmir. Perhaps what they intend is for them to always stay out of here.” Omar Abdullah, former Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India and for Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Indian Express, April 23, 2022.

“The prime minister (Modi) and the BJP are promoting it (The Kashmir File) by giving free tickets and making it tax-free. They are inciting people. They divide people on religious lines.” Mehbooba Mufti, former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, NEWS-CLICK, March 23, 2022

Debasish Roy Chowdhury, an Indian journalist wrote in TIME on March 30, 2022, “But accuracy is not the film’s priority, nor is it interested in justice and closure for the Pandit community. Instead, the purpose of The Kashmir Files is to inflame hatred against Muslims; against secular parties that Modi’s followers brand anti-Hindu; liberal intellectuals and activists, whose faith in India’s inclusive democracy runs contrary to the supremacist tenets of Hindu nationalism; and against the liberal media that the Hindu right disparages as sold-out “presstitutes.” ... Accordingly, Muslims are portrayed as uniformly evil, treacherous, and predatory. Even little Muslim boys are shown as demonic.”

**(To be continued)**

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Cont. from page 1.  
White House Eid

winner of the Best Global Music Performance, recited some Rumi poetry. Other attendees were elected officials, community leaders and activists. The elected officials included the Congressional Reps Andre Carson and Rashida Tlaib, Princeton Mayor Sadaf Jaffer, Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud, and the Dearborn Heights Mayor Bill Bazzi, who was one of the few Republicans present.

Many advocacy groups were also present. The Indian American Mus-

lim Council Chairperson Rasheed Ahmed said, "We are grateful to the US President for recognizing and celebrating Islam and Muslims as an integral part of the American life." Other representatives came from the Arab American Chamber of Commerce, Yemeni and Pakistan advocacy groups.

A sizable contingent of guests came from Emgage, which played a major role in mobilizing the Muslim community to vote for the 2020 elections with their Million Muslim Votes Campaign. Mark Crain, Executive director of Dream

of Detroit and a board member for Emgage said. "Even though we're a small community in this country, we have a rich history and a big role to play in its future. Whether at the White House or the State House, civic engagement is a must."

Most attendees were grateful that the White House reinstated the tradition of the annual Eid celebration which was started by President Bill Clinton. The Eid and Ramadan celebrations were stopped by the Trump administration as part of its general policy of marginalizing Muslim Americans. A virtual Eid

event was held in 2021 by the Biden administration, but it was boycotted by many Muslims due to the president's inaction against Israeli violence against civilians and violation of the holy sanctuary of Al Aqsa in Jerusalem.

There were concerns that the timing of the Eid event was insensitive to Muslims who traditionally spend the day with family. Arshia Ali-Khan, executive director of the Muslim Legal Fund of America, wrote on a Facebook post that she was also invited to the White House Event, but declined: "[The invita-

tion] was definitely something of value... [however] my children whom I love deeply won."

Many of the guests used the event to educate and uplift their community. Amin and Sana Aaser, part of the team behind the popular kids' media platform, Noor Kids, brought their kids to DC so they do not have to spend Eid apart. Amin created a Youtube video about his experience and gave an insider tour of the white house watched by thousands of viewers.

Cont. from page 1.  
Abortion Rights

draft, noting that it was not confirmed as drafts often change, meaning it's possible this could not be reflective of the court's final decision. "We do not know whether this draft is genuine, or whether it reflects the final decision of the Court," he said.

Despite the draft and what decision is made, he stayed hopeful that should it be true we are not at a complete loss. He called on voters to make a difference in the upcoming elections and elect pro-abortion rights officials at the federal level to help Democrats pass legislation protecting abortion rights.

"If the court does overturn Roe, it will fall on our nation's elected

officials at all levels of government to protect a woman's right to choose," Biden said. "And it will fall on voters to elect pro-choice officials this November. At the federal level, we will need more pro-choice Senators and a pro-choice majority in the House to adopt legislation that codifies Roe, which I will work to pass and sign into law."

The statement also shared that the White House counsel's office and the Gender Policy Council have been working on options to respond to potential outcomes in the Supreme Court case.

Biden's statement gives us hope because it signals consistency. Since being elected, Biden has emphasized his support of abortion rights. In January, on

the 49th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade case, he issued a statement with Vice President Kamala Harris emphasizing how the constitutional right to an abortion "is under assault as never before."

"It is a right we believe should be codified into law, and we pledge to defend it with every tool we possess," the statement said. "We are deeply committed to protecting access to health care, including reproductive health care—and to ensuring that this country is not pushed backwards on women's equality."

His statement then focused on newly passed abortion laws in Texas and the Mississippi law that is currently challenging the landmark case.

"We must ensure that our daughters and granddaughters have the same fundamental rights that their mothers and grandmothers fought for and won," the joint statement said.

The country is currently in shock following the leaked draft. Said to have been drafted in February, the 67-page draft opinion claims that Roe v. Wade and the Supreme Court's 1992 decision in Planned Parenthood v. Casey are both not grounded in the Constitution.

"We now overrule those decisions and return that authority to the people and their elected representatives," the draft opinion states.

According to the draft opinion, the high court plans to overturn the

landmark case. If done, at least 26 states will ban abortion, impacting more than 40 million women of child-bearing age, The Guttmacher Institute said in a report.

The New York-based research organization also noted that in 2021, at least 22 states passed their own versions of abortion laws that would begin as soon as Roe v. Wade is overturned. The states included Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Cont. from page 7.  
The French Elections

ing economy, perceived mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic and his weakness to confront Putin cited as his major miscues. The fact that Macron had to face Le Pen in the second round of the elections at all-a center-left technocrat vs an inveterate bigot who is often characterized as a neo-fascist- affirms how divided France is as a nation. Even with such a stark contrast between candidates that would propel the country on completely divergent futures, more than a quarter of the electorate were unpersuaded that they should vote if for no other reason than to

block the far-right from a win.

For the 5-6 million Muslims living in France, the choice for President was equally difficult and problematic. Le Pen would be catastrophic for a community that is besieged by a climate of hostility at the state level, including the criminalization of the hijab and closure of mosques under the pretense of "anti-social" sermons and imams. Her stated plan to erase Muslim life from the French public sphere, and perhaps beyond, has been on record for well over a decade.

69% of French Muslims voted for far-left candidates over Macron in the first round of the elections. But in the run-up

to the elections, Macron chose to parrot the right, rather than double down on a more liberal agenda. In speech after speech, the President indicated the need to be tougher on "Islamists," despite his inability to define them or the alleged threat they posed to France. Instead, his rantings revealed a cynical effort to court voters away from Le Pen by offering a slightly saccharine version of his opponent's popular rhetoric and policy goals. It is no surprise so many stayed home last Sunday. For them, the line of distinction between the devil they know and the one pretending to be one for the sake of some votes have been blurred, especially since Macron reached out to Le Pen's

voters in his victory speech by declaring, "An answer must be found to the anger and disagreements that led many of our compatriots to vote for the extreme right...It will be my responsibility and that of those around me." To date, Macron has yet to make such a gesture of empathy, understanding or inclusion to French Muslims.

While the liberal left in France, the European Union and even farther afield (United States, Canada and Great Britain) are breathing easier today with the reelection of Emmanuel Macron to another term as President, the first such win by the incumbent in 20 years, some realities remain omi-

nously nearby. Marine Le Pen and the far-right had their best showing in the national elections ever. Nearly half the country supports her bigoted agenda and was willing to mortgage their nation's high-minded ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity to make her the French president. And the conditions for the nation's Muslims, a community already under scrutiny, surveillance and socio-economic marginalization and discrimination, have no prospect of improvement. Whether Macron's "big win" is nothing more than a pyrrhic victory remains to be seen over the next five years.





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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.

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