

Insight Bulletin

For People Who Want to Know

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FREE COPY

Malawi Muslim Women hold Annual Gathering (Ijtima) Puts Environment conservation on agenda



Caption

The Muslim Women Organisation (MWO) held the three-day Ijtima event held at Zomba Islamic High School focusing on sensitising women on environmental conservation and management in the country.

In many cases non Muslims have looked at women in Islam and perceive their role to be one associated with several negative connotations. Muslim Women in Malawi feel that it is high time they changed such perceptions.

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Editorial

PUBLISHER

ULAMA COUNCIL OF MALAWI

MANAGING EDITOR

Abdullah .O. Mdala

MAIN EDITORIAL OFFICE

1st Floor, Globe Chambers,
Masauko Chipembere Highway,
Blantyre, Malawi.

Tel: 01 848 059 | Cell: 0994 292 015

Email: abdullahmdala@gmail.com

Insight Bulletin, is a monthly publication which analyzes and promotes good governance, and policies that will further the creation of an absolute free society in Malawi. It is a news leader in opinion and analysis on Malawi's socio-political, religious and economic development.

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All editorial correspondence in form of articles and letters should be addressed to the editor. All published articles bear the author's names. Unsigned contributions represent views of the editorial staff. Letters must include writers' full names and addresses, and may be edited for clarity.

Are Malawians Bad Employers?



The governing circle in Malawi starts either when electing their leaders through the ballot papers to the positions of such as President or by the process of vacancy announcement through different channels like civil servants or by appointment like ministers and other similar portfolios.

The aim behind the above processes is to find the suitable personnel who can deliver required services to the Malawi citizenry without looking at any discriminatory terms like faith, tribe, or ethnicity of the recipient of such services. Unfortunately the trend has been the opposite.

However, because of ignorance Malawian themselves, as a result they seem to be very bad employers as they do not take to account their employees.

While there are so many promises that the DPP government promised to the people of this nation prior to the 2014 tripartite elections, few promises have started seeing the light of the day like roads refurbishment, but many promises are unlikely to be unveiled due to the economical and political challenges the country is going through.

Some of the many challenges are of own making like corruption, there is no day that passes without learning the plundering of money from one

ministry to the other.

On the refurbishment of the roads the Malawi government has increased funding for the City Roads Improvement programme with K8 billion earmarked for the second phase of the programme to run up to next year.

The City roads upgrading project is aimed at improving road networking in the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and the old capital city, Zomba.

In the 2015/16 financial year, government allocated K6 billion of the locally sourced funds to the project; and in the 2016/17 financial year the amount has increased to K8 billion, with government emphasizing on the need of improving all dust roads across the country's cities and district.

Speaking during the launch of the project's second phase in Blantyre on Thursday, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development Kondwani Nankhumwa disclosed plans to turn the project into a national-wide initiative.

"The country is facing a serious good road network challenge coupled with a huge growing traffic. As sort we have a daunting task to maintain the existing roads and at the same time to increase the road network across the country," Nankhumwa said.

"It's a long-term programme and will soon graduate into a national roads improvement programme. Our focus is to ensure that urban areas are free of dusty and bumpy roads. Its government's belief that these upgraded roads will spur quick economic growth."

Nankhumwa said was pleased that the first phase was not hampered by mismanagement of funds, expressing optimistic of experiencing the same with the current funding.

However, contrary to the ministers' accessions, the type of roads Malawians are given is

substandard. when insight Bulletin inspected some roads in Blantyre and Lilongwe, it is surprising to note that many roads have developed potholes just in the first rains of the season. Some roads have had potholes even before they are completed.

By the time we went for printing in Chirimba ma Land Rover to Magalasi Road contractors were busy fixing the newly constructed road. To date, Not surprising as Malawians are known for not questioning how their tax is being used, to this end no one has ever complained the substandard roads government is constructing because Malawians think this is a gift from government then they do not have a right to question for something they are being given freely.

Despite being hailed as a very good initiative the DPP has implemented on behalf of Malawians, there has been also concerns on the city's failure to monitor how the constructions of the roads are being carried out, in some instances contractors have failed to construct drainage systems alongside these roads.

Anthony Kasunda who is Public Relations Manager never replied to our email seeking clarity of the same, however, the Blantyre City Council Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Alfred Chanza confirmed that they had challenges of resources, but they have agreed with the same contractors to start putting up drainage systems in all already constructed roads.

Recently Parliamentarians have criticised government for picking contractors who are offering substandard jobs. This is happening because of bribes and un called for dealings are said to play a very big role for one to win construction tenders in government.

FROM PAGE 1<<

Malawi Muslim Women hold Annual Gathering (Ijtima)

For this reason, the MuslimWomen Organisation organises gatherings order to discuss many issues related to women.

Apart from many other topics that were discussed within the three days that the women met, their focus for this year was to encourage the womenfolk to conserve environment.

Sister Tepani secretary for the organisation told insight that the theme for this year was about environment, in order to put the preaching into practice the women planted 10 trees at the centre and distributed other 200 to district chairladies for them to plant when they leave for their homes after the end of the event She said.

Local and international women presented different topics on environment, Salah, zakat, business entrepreneurship, responsibilities of women, a woman as a wife as a daughter a sister and a woman as a politician.

In her closing remarks, Chair person of the organising committee Sister Aisha Keyala said that women ought to change their mindset and adopt modern life without compromising their religious values like Islamic dress code

The Ijtima is an annual gathering where women discuss range of issues affecting their livelihood.

The 2016 gathering attracted participants form women around the country as well

as those from the neighbouring countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe Mozambique Tanzania and South Africa.



Caption



Caption

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The Role of Women in Islam

The role of women in Islam is often misunderstood.

By Angela Guzman

In many cases, outsiders looking in at the women in Islam perceive their role to be one associated with several negative connotations. These stereotypical stigmas force the women within the Islamic culture to be somewhat guarded because these social stigmas infringe on their culture and personality as an individual.

One of the most common misconceptions is that women live under some sort of oppressive dictatorship ruled by their husbands and fathers. Stemming from this misconception also lies the misunderstanding that women are forced into marriage and are severely oppressed by wearing a veil. While some of the basis of these ideas are true, they're not oppressive of the women

within the Islamic community. Instead many of these ideals are customary and are ingrained within the culture. The role of the Muslim woman is to raise the children and be a good wife. Women are encouraged to carry out all of these duties with a devotion and enthusiasm. However, isn't that what most cultures perpetuate women to be – domestic providers that supply a nurturing environment of unconditional love and devotion? Therefore, it's not out of the ordinary for a woman to be perceived as the individual responsibility for planning family events, raising children, cleaning the house, preparing meals, and representing the family within social settings.

The Muslim community has progressed and moved forward with many modern views. The woman's role is no longer just a

mother and wife. Islam permits the women, within its culture, to voyage on the Hajj pilgrimage, to exercise the right to vote, engage in politics, to have a job and even run a business as the business owner. And women in Islam have embraced these rights by partaking in all of available platforms. Women within other cultures have also become more accepting with women becoming breadwinners within their household and have also got rid of social stigmas that have overshadowed the gender of women in general. While many spectators have focused on the women in Islam due to social stigmas and stereotypes, it's important that outsiders also look within their own community before judging the role of women in Islam. Many of the misconceptions that we fixate on the Muslim culture are actually relevant within other mainstream cultures as well.

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Another misconception is the role of education. Many people believe that Muslim women are not allowed to receive an education – which in fact couldn't be further from the truth. A basic of understanding of the life of Muhammad and knowledge of the wives of the Prophet reveal several examples of women excelling within their fields of knowledge. For example, The Prophet's wife Khadijah was not only a businesswoman but a very successful one. The Muslim community encourages the role of women in Islam to be one that is educated and the Islamic world wants them to excel within their areas of interest and expertise. An important role of women in Islam is to educate themselves. Both on an academic level and within their culture. And across the board Muslim women are pushing the envelope and doing just that.

Moreover, Islam understands that it's important to educate and nurture all genders because the Muslim community relies on the next generation to lead them. The Khilafah State is obligated to provide women with the highest level of education and view women as valuable citizens of the state. The role of women in Islam is viewed as vital and honorable.

Muslim women engaging in politics is not a new phenomenon, an early example of this is at the time of the Prophet Muhammad when the leaders of Yathrib sent a party of Bani Khazraj to pledge their allegiance to him. This group was comprised of 62 men and two women who pledged allegiance. The pledge of Aqabah is well known to have had both spiritual and political implications. The pledge was not only a declaration of accepting Islam but was a promise of political support



Caption

and military protection. Later examples continue to support the idea of women in politics. In the early fourth century A.H, Um Muqtadir Billah, the mother of the Abbasid Khaleefah set up a tribunal for the purpose of settling people's petitions and lawsuits and placed one of her female courtiers as judge.

Yes, at first glance the idea of 62 to two appears daunting. But, think about it on realistic terms. Women were not viewed as equals in the United States from the beginning. Therefore, the idea that women were respected enough to engage in politics during this early time period is a huge break through. Furthermore, it may also reveal to outsiders looking in that the role of women in Islam is equalized in comparison to men. It could also be perceived that quite possibly the Muslim community is ahead of many other cultures – on the equality spectrum.

Allah says: "The believers, men and women, are protecting friends (Awliya) of one another; they join the ma'ruf (that which Allah commands) and forbid people from munkar (that which

Allah prohibits); they perform salat, and give the zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will have mercy on them. Surely Allah is All mighty, All wise" - At Taubah: 71

The role of women in Islam has continuously be projected as one that is worthless and not capable of being expressive on a political platform. However, that is not at all the case. History has revealed the progressive nature of the role of women in Islam. Furthermore, the Muslim women are continuing to push the envelope and reach new heights. Like other cultures, the idea of women achieving greatness is somewhat jaded because of the underlying social stigmas and stereotypes pre-existing. It's important that the role of women in Islam not only be to continue to break barriers and achieve greatness, but to breakdown the stereotypes that are hundreds and hundreds of years old. Once we're able to do this as outsiders looking into the women of Islam then we'll be able to move forward as a whole.



How Britain Destroyed the Palestinian Homeland

NINETY-NINE YEARS SINCE BALFOUR'S "PROMISE", PALESTINIANS INSIST THAT THEIR RIGHTS IN PALESTINE CANNOT BE DISMISSED.

When I was a child growing up in a Gaza refugee camp, I looked forward to November 2. On that day, every year, thousands of students and camp residents would descend upon the main square of the camp, carrying Palestinian flags and placards, to denounce the Balfour Declaration.

Truthfully, my giddiness then was motivated largely by the fact that schools would inevitably shut down and, following a brief but bloody confrontation with the Israeli army, I would go home early to the loving embrace of my mother, where I would eat a snack and watch cartoons.

At the time, I had no idea who Balfour actually was, and how his "declaration" all those years ago

had altered the destiny of my family and, by extension, my life and the lives of my children as well.

All I knew was that he was a bad person and, because of his terrible deed, we subsisted in a refugee camp, encircled by a violent army and by an ever-expanding graveyard filled with "martyrs". Balfour had pledged my homeland to another people

Decades later, destiny would lead me to visit the Whittingehame Church, a small parish in which Arthur James Balfour is now buried.

While my parents and grandparents are buried in a refugee camp, an ever-shrinking space under a perpetual siege and immeasurable hardship, Balfour's resting place is an oasis of peace and calmness. The empty meadow all around the church is large enough to host all

the refugees in my camp.

The British government remains unrepentant after all these years. It has yet to take any measure on moral responsibility, however symbolic, for what it has done to the Palestinians.

Finally, I became fully aware of why Balfour was a "bad person".

Once Britain's Prime Minister, then the Foreign Secretary from late 1916, Balfour had pledged my homeland to another people. That promise was made on November 2, 1917, on behalf of the British government in the form of a letter sent to the leader of the Jewish community in Britain, Walter Rothschild.

At the time, Britain was not even in control of Palestine, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire. Either way, my homeland was never

Balfour's to so casually transfer to anyone else. His letter read:

"His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

He concluded, "I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation."

Ironically, members of the British parliament have declared that the use of the term "Zionist" is both anti-Semitic and abusive.

The British government remains unrepentant after all these years. It has yet to take any measure of moral responsibility, however symbolic, for what it has done to the Palestinians. Worse, it is now busy attempting to control the very language used by Palestinians to identify those who have deprived them of their land and freedom.

But the truth is, not only was Rothschild a Zionist, Balfour was, too. Zionism, then, before it deservedly became a swearword, was a political notion that Europeans prided themselves to be associated with.

In fact, just before he became Prime Minister, David Cameron declared, before the Conservative Friends of Israel meeting, that he, too, was a Zionist. To some extent, being a Zionist remains a rite of passage for some Western leaders.

Balfour was hardly acting on his own. True, the Declaration bears his name, yet, in reality, he was a loyal agent of an empire with massive geopolitical designs, not only concerning Palestine alone, but with Palestine as part of a larger Arab landscape.

Just a year earlier, another sinister document was introduced. albeit

secretly. It was endorsed by another top British diplomat, Mark Sykes and, on behalf of France, by François Georges-Picot. The Russians were informed of the agreement, as they too had received a piece of the Ottoman cake.

The document indicated that, once the Ottomans were soundly defeated, their territories, including Palestine, would be split among the prospective victorious parties.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, also known as the Asia Minor Agreement, was signed in secret 100 years ago, two years into World War I. It signified the brutal nature of colonial powers that rarely associated land and resources with people that lived upon the land and owned those resources.

The centrepiece of the agreement was a map that was marked with straight lines by a china graph pencil. The map largely determined the fate of the Arabs, dividing them in accordance with various haphazard assumptions of tribal and sectarian lines.

Once the war was over, the loot was to be divided into spheres of influence:

- France would receive areas which included: the region of south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq - including Mosul, most of Syria and Lebanon.

- British-controlled areas which included: Jordan, southern Iraq, Haifa and Acre in Palestine and a coastal strip between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan.

- Russia would be granted Istanbul, Armenia and the strategic Turkish Straits.

The improvised map consisted not only of lines but also colours, along with language that attested to the fact that the two countries viewed the Arab region purely on materialistic terms, without paying the slightest attention to the possible repercussions of slicing up entire civilizations with a multifarious history of co-operation

and conflict.

The agreement read, partly:

"... in the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab state or confederation of Arab states."

The brown area, however, was designated as an international administration, the nature of which was to be decided upon after further consultation among Britain, France and Russia. The Sykes-Picot negotiations finished in March 1916 and were official, although secretly signed on May 19, 1916. World War I concluded on November 11, 1918, after which the division of the Ottoman Empire began in earnest.

British and French mandates were extended over divided Arab entities, while Palestine was granted to the Zionist movement a year later, when Balfour conveyed the British government's promise, sealing the fate of Palestine to live in perpetual war and turmoil till today.

The idea of Western "peacemakers" and "honest-brokers", who are very much a party in every Middle Eastern conflict, is not new. British betrayal of Arab aspirations goes back many decades. They used the Arabs as pawns in their Great Game against other colonial contenders, only to betray them later on, while still casting themselves as friends bearing gifts.

Nowhere else was this hypocrisy on full display as was in the case of Palestine. Starting with the first wave of Zionist Jewish migration to Palestine in 1882, European countries helped to facilitate the movement of illegal settlers and resources, where the establishment of many colonies, large and small, was afoot.

So when Balfour sent his letter to Rothschild, the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine was very much plausible.

Still, many supercilious promises were being made to the Arabs during the Great War years. as

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How Britain Destroyed the Palestinian Homeland

self-imposed Arab leadership sided with the British in their war against the Ottoman Empire. Arabs were promised instant independence, including that of the Palestinians.

The understanding among Arab leaders was that Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations was to apply to Arab provinces that were ruled by the Ottomans. Arabs were told that they were to be respected as “a sacred trust of civilization”, and their communities were to be recognised as “independent nations”.

Palestinians wanted to believe that they were also included in that civilization sacredness, and were deserving of independence, too. Their conduct in support of the Pan-Arab Congress, as voting delegates in July 1919, which elected Faisal as a King of a state comprising Palestine, Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria, and their continued support of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, were all expressions of their desire for the long-coveted sovereignty.

When the intentions of the British and their rapport with the Zionists became too apparent, Palestinians rebelled, a rebellion that has never ceased, 99 years later, for the horrific consequences of British colonialism and the eventual complete Zionist takeover of Palestine are still felt after all these years.

Paltry attempts to pacify Palestinian anger were to no avail, especially after the League of Nations Council in July 1922 approved the terms of the British Mandate over Palestine - which was originally granted to Britain in April 1920 - without consulting the Palestinians at all, who would disappear from the British and international radar, only to reappear as negligible rioters,

troublemakers, and obstacles to the joint British-Zionist colonial concoctions.

Despite occasional assurances to the contrary, the British intention of ensuring the establishment of an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine was becoming clearer with time

The Balfour Declaration had set the stage for the full-scale ethnic cleansing that followed, three decades

In his book, *Before Their Diaspora* Palestinian scholar Walid Khaalidi captured the true collective understanding among Palestinians regarding what had befallen their homeland nearly a century ago:

“The Mandate, as a whole, was seen by the Palestinians as an Anglo-Zionist condominium and its terms as instrument for the implementation of the Zionist programme; it had been imposed on them by force, and they considered it to be both morally and legally invalid. The Palestinians constituted the vast majority of the population and owned the bulk of the land. Inevitably, the ensuing struggle centred on this status quo. The British and the Zionists were determined to subvert and revolutionise it, the Palestinians to defend and preserve it.”

In fact, that history remains in constant replay: The Zionists claimed Palestine and renamed it “Israel”; the British continue to support them, although never ceasing to pay lip service to the Arabs; the Palestinian people remain a nation that is geographically fragmented between refugee camps, in the Diaspora, militarily occupied, or treated as second-class citizens in a country upon which their ancestors dwelt since time immemorial.

While Balfour cannot be blamed for

all the misfortunes that have befallen Palestinians since he communicated his brief but infamous letter, the notion that his “promise” embodied - that of complete disregard of the aspirations of the Palestinian Arab people - is handed from one generation of British diplomats to the next, the same way that Palestinian resistance to colonialism is also spread across generations.

In his essay in the *Al-Ahram Weekly*, entitled “Truth and Reconciliation” , the late Professor Edward Said wrote: “Neither the Balfour Declaration nor the Mandate ever specifically concede that Palestinians had political, as opposed to civil and religious, rights in Palestine.

The idea of inequality between Jews and Arabs was, therefore, built into British - and, subsequently, Israeli and US - policy from the start.”

That inequality continues, thus the perpetuation of the conflict. What the British, the early Zionists, the Americans and subsequent Israeli governments failed to understand, and continue to ignore at their own peril, is that there can be no peace without justice and equality in Palestine; and that Palestinians will continue to resist, as long as the reasons that inspired their rebellion nearly a century ago, remain in place.

Ninety-nine years later, the British government is yet to possess the moral courage to take responsibility for what their government has done to the Palestinian people.

Ninety-nine years later, Palestinians insist that their rights in Palestine cannot be dismissed, neither by Balfour, nor by his modern peers in “Her Majesty’s Government”.



Mai Aisha Sisters and Youth Aids Program (MASYAP) Conducts Annual General Meeting



The Mai Aisha Trust Youth and Aids Program organised an annual general meeting which took place on 29th October 2016 at Iqra Islamic Propagation Centre in Blantyre.

Mai Aisha Sisters and Youth Aids Program (MASYAP) Conducts Annual General Meeting

Although within the broader aims of improving the knowledge of HIV/AIDS amongst Muslim girls in the Southern Region and to encourage girls to remain in school, the second Annual gathering was organised with an aim of interacting with youth and supporting groups that are under the organisation. The groups from districts of Blantyre, Thyolo, Mulanje Chikwawa and Chiradzulo which are catchment areas for the organisation came to participate on the event.

According to Kaamilah Mnthengu the Youth Coordinator for MASYAP, the youth Programme was established in January 2015 after the research which was conducted by our team seeking to find out the low levels of HIV and Aids knowledge among the young Muslim girls. Kaamila's records showed that so far there are there are 23 youth groups under MASYAP.

We established the youth programmes in order to increase the percentage of girls who know their HIV status, to educate girls on HIV prevention methods and contraception, to educate these young girls on the different alternatives for their future, to empower girls to make their



Caption

own decisions and finally given the availability of the funds the youth programme also aims at providing support for those girls who have been diagnosed with HIV among others.



Caption

In her welcoming remarks the Programme Manager Katherine Ryland said that MASYAP organised the event in order to meet every support group under her organisation and interact with them at an event like this." It is only through these meetings where we discuss on issues of stigma, HIV preventing methods and other related issues surrounding HIV and Aids." "it is also my first interaction with them as I have been in the country for only three months I want all of you here to consider your futures, I want you t realize what you want in life and have huge opportunities in Malawi". She said.

Apart from youth programmes MASYAP implements education sessions, HIV and Aids Testing and counselling, school fees support and microfinance initiatives.



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Correlation between Islamic and Conventional Economic Systems

By: Innocent Lanjesi Bamusi

Economic systems are the sole determinants of growth and developments for individuals, the societies as well as nations. This is because they are extremely different in many ways. The key difference is that Islamic economic system is based on Shariah foundation. Thus, all dealing, transaction, business approach, product feature, investment focus, responsibility are derived from the Shariah law, which lead to the significant difference in many part of the operations with as of the conventional

On the other hand, conventional economic system is essentially based on the debtor-creditor relationship between the depositors and the bank on one hand, and between the borrowers and the bank on the other. Interest is considered to be the price of credit, reflecting the opportunity cost of money.

Islamic economic system is the only principle that provides a system with the true balance between the individual and the community as well as social needs. It did not view the society as simply a grouping of individuals, with no relationship or dependence between them; nor did it view fundamental principles where by the economy should be generated.

Rather, Islam considered the society as a unit composed of individuals living within a specific social order, linked to each other

through specific thoughts and ideas, emotions and sentiments. With that fact, it puts forward the best economic principles which are even used currently by many communities.

Economic principles in Islam regulate the economic affairs in such a way as to secure the satisfaction of all the basic needs for the individual and the society completely and to enable each individual to satisfy luxurious needs as much as possible.

For those who are unable to meet their needs, the Islamic State(in our case the secular

government) should provide for its people from its own wealth as well as the Zakat (tax) paid by its citizens. Therefore, Islam secures the rights and the honor of every individual in the society and does not consider the economic problem to be solved as long as there is ever no individual whose basic needs are not met.

Furthermore, Islam designated the ownership as one of three types, public, private, or state. These kinds of ownership are defined by Islam and cannot be altered. Thus, public property cannot become state or private property; private property cannot be confiscated by the state as public property, and so on. Islam thus ensures that the rights of all individuals are protected and the society as a whole is conducive and living in secured environment.

Regarding the ownership of wealth and property, Islam regulated the means by which to obtain the wealth in a manner that allows the individuals to satisfy their needs while still preserving the sanctity of the society.

Thus, Islam prohibited prostitution, the sale of alcohol, and dealing in usury as a means of earning wealth because they lead either to degenerate social behavior or economic injustice.

Islam encourages competition and provides true opportunities by preventing the establishment of monopolies and other forms of economic exploitation.



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