

Muslim Views Editorials: January - September 2001

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The following summary reflects some of the main concerns of the newspaper for nine months and reflects the position of the paper on the various issues raised in the Editorials of *Muslim Views*.

JANUARY: Every Trick in the Book

The headline is drawn from PAC MP, Ms Patricia de Lille's allegations that the ANC has sought various means to divert attention away from the probe into the R43 billion arms deal.

The Editorial identifies three of these "tricks": undermining the Standing Committee on Public Accounts whose task it is, inter alia, to uncover irregularities in any government deal, the exclusion of Judge Willem Heath and his Special Investigations Unit from the probe and the axing of Andrew Feinstein, an ANC member who is committed to a fair and transparent investigation.

The Editorial further explores the ANC government's attempts at maintaining a semblance of transparency and accountability as well as their inability to do so due to the nature of political hierarchy of a ruling party, which precludes effective dissent from within.

The paper recognises that South Africans have a right to know if there were any corrupt dealings and calls for a full investigation.

FEBRUARY: The Need For a Global Perspective of the Hajj

This Editorial was published at the time of the annual Hajj and examines the typical mindset of South African Muslims who undertake this sacred journey.

The Editorial makes a distinction between the objective events and procedures of the Hajj on the one hand, and the subjective experience of pilgrims, on the other. In essence, the Editorial questions the way in which South African pilgrims tend towards a parochial experience of the Hajj, focusing on mundane problems like poor accommodation and flight arrangements while the vast majority of pilgrims from other countries are concerned about more fundamental issues like basic human rights in their own countries.

The Editorial calls for “both a local and a global perspective” of the Hajj in which issues at home as well as issues abroad are effectively addressed.

MARCH: Decisive Steps Needed for Hajj

Continuing the theme of the Hajj, the Editorial moves to a more “local” concern in the “Hajj industry”, namely the polarised and almost contending interests of the pilgrims on the one hand, and the travel agents, operators, and hoteliers on the other.

In this instance the newspaper speaks for the approximately 7000 South African pilgrims who are “vulnerable”. The Editorial refers to the South African Hajj and Umrah Council as a body that has failed to “effectively regulate” the industry.

Finally, the Editorial makes two recommendations: firstly that SAHUC be empowered to enforce its regulations and to penalise offenders and secondly an intensive programme of education should be instituted.

APRIL: South Africa’s State of Health and Muslims

The April edition of *Muslim Views* was published at the time of the Annual Islamic Medical Association’s (IMA) Convention in Cape Town.

With reference to research and statistics, the Editorial describes the basic state of the public health services in South Africa. It also discusses the relation between the current conditions and the socio-economic conditions inherited from Apartheid South Africa as well the state of clean water supplies, public transport and housing. The important figures concerning infant mortality rates and especially Aids are presented in a global and a local context.

The Editorial then considers the role of Muslims in the health of South Africa, with specific reference to and a brief, critical assessment of the IMA Convention.

MAY: Mouloud: Transforming a Celebration

This edition of *Muslim Views* recognises two main positions of Muslims with respect to Mouloud celebrations and reflects a clear endorsement of the practice as is currently manifest in South Africa.

With a reference to the historical context of Mouloud in South Africa, the paper proceeds to briefly describe the comparative significance of the practice in Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa.

The Editorial further makes a connection between the political, social and cultural role of South African Muslims and their religious obligations and traditional practices like Moulood celebrations.

In recommending a transformation of the celebration, the paper proposes that Moulood should be a forum that applies the Prophetic model to real issues like health, crime prevention and education. It also proposes that Moulood takes a shift away from “isolationist” celebrations and that the actual teachings of Muhammad (SAW) be incorporated in “overt” and “covert” programmes of da’wah to other South Africans.

JUNE: Reflecting on Youth Day

This Editorial comprises a discussion of two special features published in *Muslim Views* on the occasion of Youth Day, commemorating the resistance struggle culminating in the iconic images of the slain Hector Petersen in the arms of the slain Mbuyisa Makhubu.

The two features are those written by Vuyisa Qunta and Imam Abdur-Rashid Omar, both from their particular perspectives. The Editorial provides an expository analysis of the main arguments and criticisms the two writers have of the commemoration of Youth Day.

The discussion on Imam Omar’s feature is further extended to in a discussion on the role of adults in exploring the issues of rights and responsibilities of youth. In the conclusion the Editorial considers the question of a “charter for the rights and responsibilities of Muslim youth” as an important entity of society.

JULY: Moral Questions for Conference on Racism

The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance from 31 August to 7 September provided the subject for this Editorial.

In placing the conference as a significant event in South Africa, the Editorial discusses its past failures and successes as well as its capacity to meet contemporary global challenges. Two challenges are identified in particular: firstly, the changing nature and complex forms of racism and, secondly, the role of the Internet and new technologies in this phenomenon.

In a discussion on the human rights violations of the Palestinians at the hands of Israelis, the Editorial calls for a revisit of the UN General Assembly Resolution 337 in which Zionism was declared a form of racism.

It also questions the moral veracity and sincerity of the draft resolution of the conference, which expresses concern over anti-Semitism, labelling it as “equally abhorrent”.

In pointing out the culpability of India in its treatment of the Dalits as an interesting case, the Editorial exhorts South African Muslim leaders and institutions to use this platform in order to project the Islamic view on racism and to define their role in eradicating it.

AUGUST: Big Brother in Defence of Zionism

This Editorial focused on the US threat to boycott the World Conference Against Racism in the light of its support of Zionist Israel’s ongoing atrocities against Palestinians.

The paper argues that the Zionist state is built on a lie and it needs to perpetuate these lies in order to continue its injustices against the Palestinians. The US’s demand that Zionism as a form of racism be removed from the conference agenda must be viewed in the light of its defence of Zionist Israel’s racist policies.

It further goes on to draw an analogy between the American assault on Vietnam in the interests of “democracy” and Israel’s attack on the Palestinians in the interests of security. The continued occupation of Palestine, Syria and Egypt by Israel is also in the strategic interests of the US.

The Editorial goes on to demand that UN General Assembly Resolution 337 be reinstated. Pointing to the Congress of South African Trade Unions’ support of the cause of Palestinians, the Editorial calls on the South African political leadership to use the WCAR to launch a sustained international campaign to isolate and dismantle the Zionist State of Israel.

SEPTEMBER: A Principled Response to a Heinous Crime

The most newsworthy event in decades, namely the attack by hijackers on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September, was addressed by this Editorial.

In recognising the responsibility of Muslims around the world to respond to and condemn the attack, the Editorial also recognises the concomitant responsibility of Muslims to place the attack in its historical and global context.

With specific reference to the hostile and destabilising role of the United States in Central America, Iraq and Palestine, the Editorial calls for a critical examination of the claim that the attacks were directed at the “free and democratic world”.

The Editorial proceeds to critically examine the roles of particularly Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and India in promoting the cause of a US-led offensive against Afghanistan, even in the absence of concrete evidence linking Usama Bin Laden to the attack.

In conclusion the Editorial calls on Muslims to engage the media more effectively and constructively in the interests of an Islamic and truly representative Muslim perspective. It also admonishes Muslims to engage Islamophobia by inviting non-Muslims to a deeper appreciation of Islam and Muslims in the present conflict.