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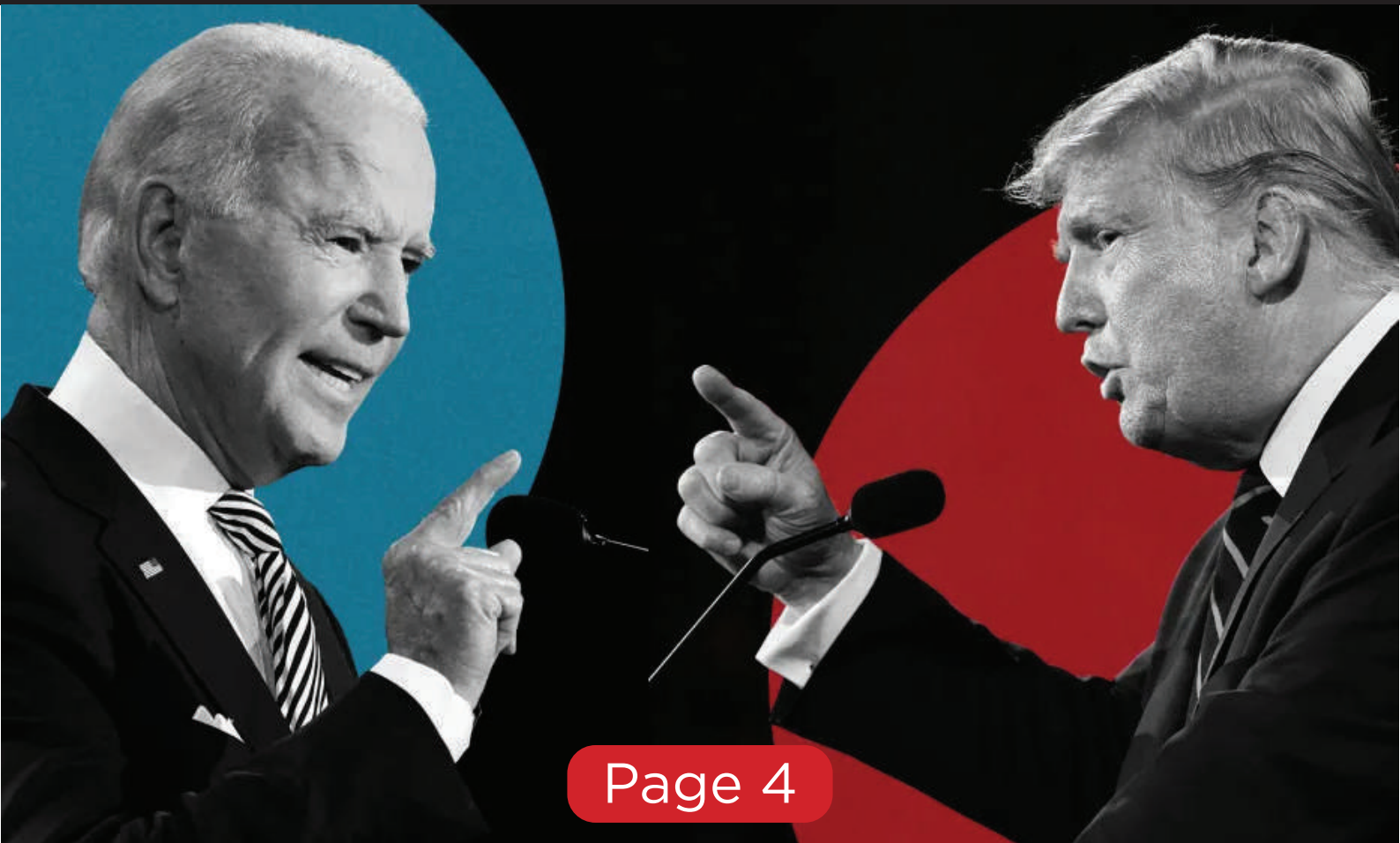
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Editorial

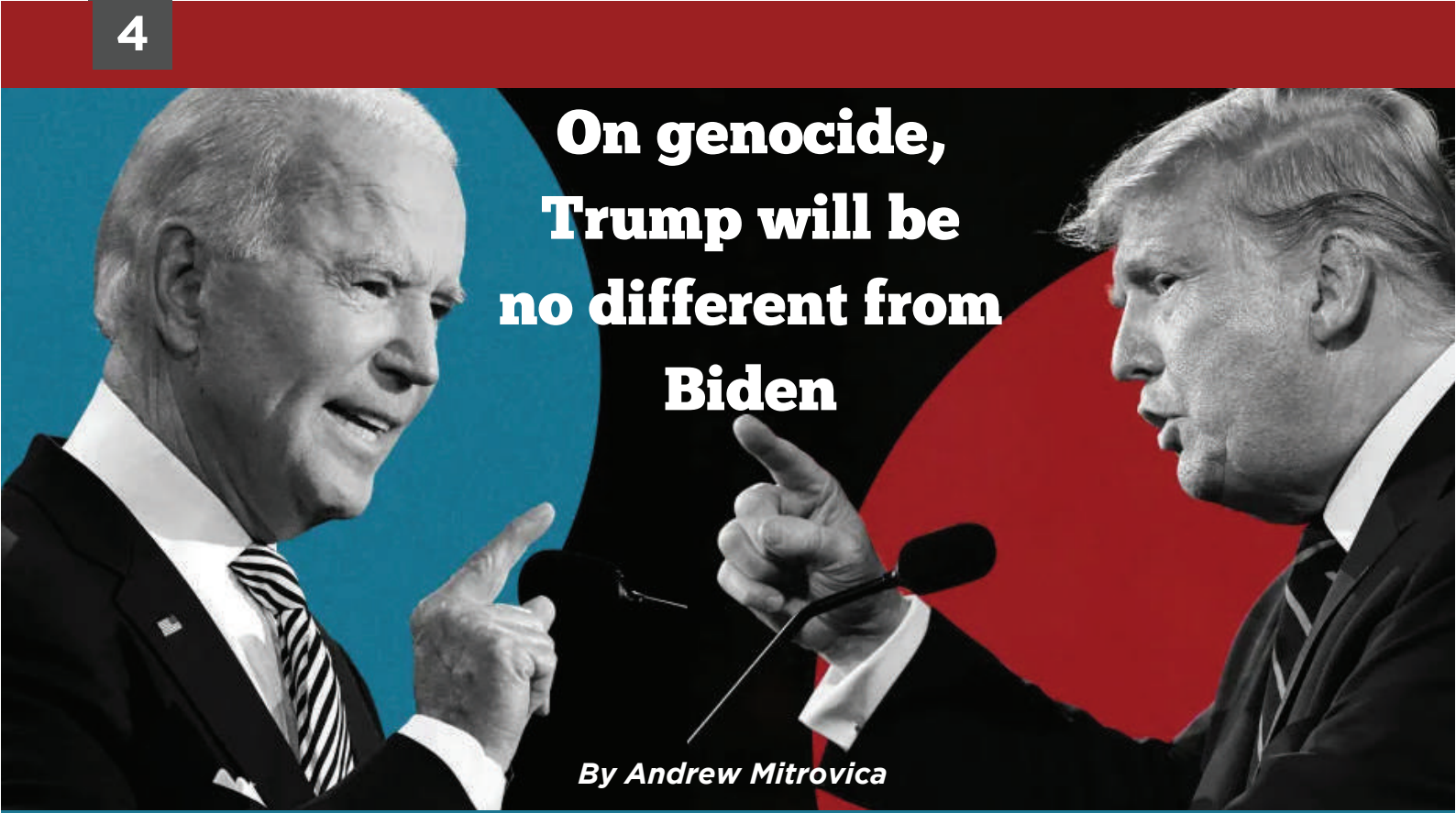
Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil - Assistant Editor



The latest massacre in Islamabad exhibit that Pakistani politics and political entities are there solely to gain power and exercise it, not to benefit the country. No doubt there is freedom in the Country; guns, murder, cruelty, injustice, immortality, the will of the powerful, and monopoly are all free in the country. On the other hand the weak, poor and their wishes are under siege. This Country has become hell for the masses and heaven of the elite. On November 27, 2024 it appeared as though the ego, intransigence, and desires of the strong and decision-making strata were paramount, and the masses were merely puppets working to achieve their logical or irrational goals. In addition to working together to accomplish their goals, so-called politicians and those who support them have an unrivaled ambition to severely suppress the masses and their demands.

Regretfully, the nation lacks a constitution, laws, and justice, and it appears that the establishment has started handling everything on its own. PM Shehbaz Sharif claims that terrorism is the root of all of the nation's issues, yet up until now, all operations have been directed at the political party PTI rather than the terrorists. The circumstances also demonstrate that genuine terrorists are innocent in the eyes of the ruling class, which views only those who oppose or contest the goals of the powerful or who have an impact on their decisions as terrorists. This is the age of social media, awareness, and information; the world has become a global village; and the country's state of affairs is deteriorating because of the outdated policies of the power elite. Unfortunately, those in positions of authority do not accept that things have changed.

The establishment and traditional politicians are manipulating the nation in an attempt to preserve their alleged reputation. In the near future, the situation will deteriorate and become more hostile, and the Islamabad incident will undoubtedly increase enmity. By suppressing the populace and their ambitions, which now appears to be challenging, they hope to hold onto their authority and control. Undoubtedly, the same reasoning appears to be behind putting Imran Khan behind bars: that, by providing the masses with a leader, revolution, and a change toward the goals of the people, the monopoly of traditional politics and the establishment will be broken. Every privileged group in Pakistan is struggling for its existence and survival, according to the facts, but history demonstrates that the right always wins eventually and the acceptance of public opinion will undoubtedly be the triumph of true democracy.



On genocide, Trump will be no different from Biden

By Andrew Mitrovica

Trump has picked 'staunchly pro-Israel' cadres for his administration, just like all other US presidents of the past 75 years.

If a Pulitzer Prize was handed out for the (unintentionally) funniest, stitch-inducing headline drafted by a “major” news organisation in 2024, then The New York Times – which craves such frivolous baubles – would win it without question.

Here’s the “award-winning” headline, published last week in the aftermath of US President-elect Donald Trump’s diplomatic selections that, according to the Times, will “help shape President-elect Trump’s strategy” on the Middle East.

“Trump’s Middle East Picks Signal Staunch Pro-Israel Policy,” the Times wrote.

It is just so comical, isn’t it?

An identical headline could have been recycled verbatim after every Democrat or Republican president-elect made public his “Middle East picks” since Israel’s engineered inception in 1948.

My goodness.

The headline’s implicit suggestion is that, somehow, for some puzzling reason, there may have been a scintilla of doubt that Trump was not going to adopt a “Staunch Pro-Israel Policy” like all his deferential predecessors.

Sure, Trump played nicey-nicey with a bunch of gullible Arab “leaders” (pawns) in swing-state Michigan during the presidential election campaign to curry fleeting favour with a “community” he would immediately abandon once he scored 270 electoral votes.

The headline’s second underlying inference is that any US president-elect – Democrat or Republican – would consider, let alone be capable of, embracing anything other than a

“Staunch Pro-Israel Policy”.

Finally, and perhaps most absurdly, in its ongoing and signature efforts to normalise a fascist president-elect, the Times’s uproarious headline and sub-headline imply that Trump, who will soon occupy the Oval Office for a second time, has a nuanced understanding of the Middle East that will translate into a well-defined “policy” and “strategy” for the region.

My goodness – the sequel.

This may be a revelation to the Times, but I don’t think that Trump can even distinguish between Iran and Iraq on a map.

But, as we know, a nuanced understanding of the Middle East is not necessarily a prerequisite in the White House or the State Department, when it comes to electing or appointing people to take carriage of America’s “policy” or “strategy” for that troubled part of the world.

Do the discredited names George W Bush, Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice and the late Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell spring to anyone’s mind – particularly at the complicit New York Times?

Lest we forget.

Predictably, Joe Biden and Antony Blinken followed the “shock and awe” gang’s ruinous footprints by giving the indicted prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, all the money, arms, and “strategic” cover he required to commit genocide in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Biden, Blinken and United Nations Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield have pursued the same “kill first, think later” “policy” or “strategy” – take your pick – that the “shock and awe” gang employed with such disastrous and inhumane consequences.

You would have reasonably thought that the calamitous invasion of Iraq would have given Biden, Blinken and Thomas-Greenfield pause.

You would be wrong.

Instead, true to “kill first, think later” form, Biden, Blinken and Thomas-Greenfield have enabled a genocide – that has already claimed the lives of more than 43,000 Palestinians, mostly children and women – with the patina of faux seriousness that Trump and halting company lack and that is so valued by the learned cognoscenti at the Times, CNN and MSNBC.

So, why anyone, anywhere, would be “shocked” that Trump has chosen an evangelical Christian and wannabe rampaging Israeli settler, Mike Huckabee, to be America’s next ambassador to Israel is a silly mystery to me.

Why anyone, anywhere would be “shocked” that pro-Israel zealots like Senator Marco Rubio and Representative Elise Stefanik would be appointed secretary of state and UN ambassador respectively is also a silly mystery to me.

Like Biden, Blinken, and Thomas-Greenfield, Trump, Rubio, Huckabee and Stefanik believe that Israel enjoys the absolute, uncontested “right to defend itself”. If that means the erasure of Gaza and the West Bank, then so be it — decency, human and civil rights conventions, and international law be damned.

Beyond the rhetorical edges about a mythical “two-state solution”, there is no “daylight” between Biden, Blinken, and Thomas-Greenfield and Trump, Rubio, Huckabee and Stefanik concerning the “future” of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

They have no “future”.

Biden, Blinken, and Thomas-Greenfield have permitted Israel to do to Gaza and the West Bank what Trump, Rubio, Huckabee and Stefanik have long hoped to do to Gaza and the West Bank – turn what remains of Palestinian land into dust and memory by, if need be, lethal and indiscriminate force.

Trump, Rubio, Huckabee and Stefanik represent the slightly more blunt and profane continuum of America’s defining “kill first, think later” attitude towards the Middle East.

That is why Democrats’ and the cognoscenti’s fuming “outrage” over Trump’s “scandalous” cabinet and other high-profile administration choices has been largely reserved – surprise, surprise – for his “controversial” picks for attorney general and defence secretary.

The methodical, more than yearlong destruction of Gaza and the West Bank is stale news.

Biden, Blinken and Thomas-Greenfield gave Israel the “green light” to kill as many Palestinians as it wants to for as long as it wants to and Trump, Rubio, Huckabee and Stefanik will do precisely the same.

On genocide: the new White House gang is the same as the old White House gang.

Hold on. There’s still hope. The Arab leaders (pawns) who met with Trump towards the end of the campaign – in rebuff of Kamala Harris – have sent him a letter asking the president-elect “to apply [his] political influence in demanding an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon and Palestine” with a view towards negotiating “a lasting peace”.

Of course, a letter – assuming Trump bothers to read it – is bound to change Washington’s ingrained view that Palestinians are always the perpetrators and never the victims, and that their lives are as disposable as they are inconsequential.

Yes, a pretty-please-worded letter should finally do the elusive trick.

Source:<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/11/19/on-genocide-trump-will-be-no-different-from-biden>

The Ukraine War May Spiral Out of Control Before Trump Takes Office | Opinion

By Sergey G. Maidukov



On Thursday, Ukraine claimed that Russia launched an ICBM at the eastern city of Dnipro. What actually struck was not an intercontinental ballistic missile, but rather a new, shorter-range type that is capable of carrying nuclear warheads. But whatever the weapon's capabilities, it was another escalation in a war that has been intensifying in recent weeks.

On Sunday morning, Russia launched another massive drone and missile attack on Ukraine's energy and other critical infrastructure.

Most of the 120 missiles and 90 drones were shot down or otherwise neutralized, but some got through, leading to power outages and a resurgence of blackouts.

Some observers suggested that this was Putin's way of reminding Ukraine that it is facing another brutal winter with heat and light meaning survival. I interpret this as Russian President Vladimir Putin's anxious response to the United States' decision to allow Ukraine to use long-range missiles for attacks on targets within Russia.

While a formal announcement of the U.S. decision came a few hours after the attack, it would be imprudent to assume that Russian intelligence was unaware of it beforehand.

Even before Donald Trump's election victory, the president-elect expressed his intention to bring the Russia-Ukraine war to an end as soon as possible. Both sides, therefore, are preparing for negotiations in one way or another. Although Russia is in a hurry to consolidate its gains on the various fronts, overall, it had notably decreased its missile attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure. Ukraine, for its part, had avoided deploying combat drones against Russian oil refineries.

Both parties had their knives hidden behind their backs, but still it looked like a compromise was looming. And then the administration of President Joe Biden decided to shatter that

illusion. He had previously refused to allow Ukraine to use the ATACMS missile system to strike targets inside Russia out of concern that such strikes would escalate the war.

This major policy reversal comes just two months before Biden hands over the reins to Trump, who had always been skeptical of U.S. military support for Ukraine. In fact, Biden's decision lines up with the Trump team's push for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to kick off peace talks with Putin, all while hinting that Ukraine might lose military support if they didn't.

Despite Zelensky's pleading for permission to launch for weeks, his response was remarkably subdued.

"Today, much is being said in the media about us receiving permission for the relevant actions," he said in his nightly video address. "But strikes are not made with words. Such things are not announced. The missiles will speak for themselves."

This long-delayed decision by Biden is unlikely to be enough to turn the tide of the war. But raising the stakes makes Trump's role as peacemaker much more difficult.

The number of long-range missiles the Pentagon is prepared to send to Ukraine is unclear. There are also questions over how many Storm Shadow missiles the United Kingdom and France can supply. However, it is certain that all these systems cannot be fired from Ukraine into Russia without the Pentagon's approval.

Putin has warned against allowing Western weapons to be used to hit Russia, saying Moscow would view that as the "direct participation" of NATO countries in the war.

We are left to try to guess how will Trump react to what appears to be an escalating fight. Some of his top officials have voiced their disapproval of the missile authorization. A lot of Trump's allies, such as Vice President-elect JD Vance, have repeatedly said that the U.S. shouldn't send any more military support to Ukraine.

Biden's move seems to have taken them all off guard. The most dramatic reaction so far has come from Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., who posted on social media: "The military industrial complex seems to want to make sure they get World War 3 going before my father has a chance to create peace and save lives."

It's still a mystery what the president-elect will decide, but a lot of people in Ukraine are worried he might halt weapon shipments, including ATACMS ammo.

"I'm not going to start wars, I'm going to stop wars," Trump said in his victory speech on Election Day. It won't be long before we see how his claim plays out.

Source:<https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-war-may-spiral-out-control-before-trump-takes-office-opinion-1990128>

Downing Street indicates Netanyahu would be arrested in UK after ICC warrant

By Alix Culbertson

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the war in Gaza.

Downing Street has indicated Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would be arrested if he arrived on British soil following an international arrest warrant being issued for him.

On Thursday, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and former Israeli defence secretary Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the war in Gaza.

The UK government was reluctant to commit to saying Netanyahu would be arrested if he came to the UK but Sir Keir Starmer's spokesman said the government would "fulfil its legal obligations" in relation to the arrest warrant.

"The UK will always comply with its legal obligations as set out by domestic law, and indeed international law," he said.

He added the domestic process linked to ICC arrest warrants has never been used to date by the UK because the country has never been visited by anyone wanted by the international court.

Earlier on Friday, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said it "wouldn't be appropriate for me to comment" on the processes involved as the ICC is independent, although the UK is a member.

She told Sky News: "We've always respected the importance of international law, but in the majority of the cases that they pursue, they don't become part of the British legal process."



"What I can say is that obviously, the UK government's position remains that we believe the focus should be on getting a ceasefire in Gaza."

However, Emily Thornberry, Labour chair of the foreign affairs committee in parliament, told Sky News: "If Netanyahu comes to Britain, our obligation under the Rome Convention would be to arrest him under the warrant from the ICC."

"Not really a question of should, we are required to because we are members of the ICC."

After winning July's election the government said it would not oppose the ICC's right to issue the warrants.

Ireland, France and Italy have signalled they would arrest Netanyahu if he came to their countries.

Asked if police would arrest the Israeli leader in Ireland, Irish Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "Yes, absolutely. We support international courts and we apply their warrants."

Germany said it would make a decision if Netanyahu came to Germany but said it is one of the "biggest supporters of the ICC", partly as a result of history.

A German government spokesman said: "At the same time, it is a consequence of German history that we share unique relations and a great responsibility with Israel."

An ICC arrest warrant was also issued for Hamas leader Mohammed Diab Ibrahim al Masri, the mastermind behind the 7 October attacks in Israel, for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Israel claims Al Masri was killed earlier this year but the ICC said that has not been confirmed, so it was issuing the arrest warrant.

Netanyahu's office said the warrants against him and Gallant were "antisemitic" and said Israel "rejects with disgust the absurd and false actions".

Neither Israel nor the US are members of the ICC. Israel has rejected the court's jurisdiction and denies committing war crimes in Gaza.

US President Joe Biden described the warrants against Israeli leaders as "outrageous", adding: "Whatever the ICC might imply, there is no equivalence - none - between Israel and Hamas."

Former Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett said the warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant were a "mark of shame" for the ICC.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews said the ICC's decision sent a "terrible message".

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Friday he would invite Netanyahu to visit Hungary and he would guarantee the arrest warrant would "not be observed".

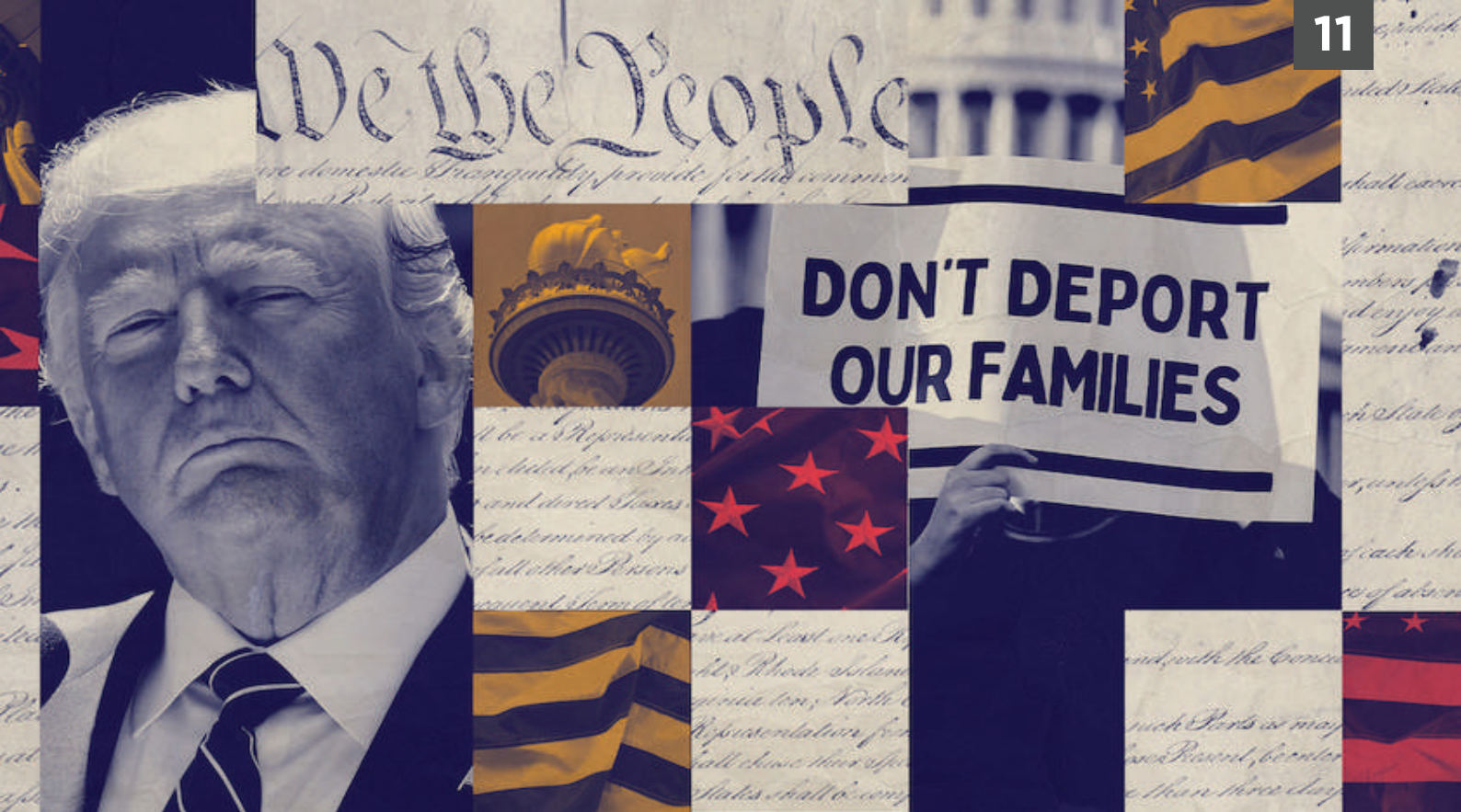
The ICC originally said it was seeking arrest warrants for the three men in May for the alleged crimes and on Thursday announced that it had rejected challenges by Israel and issued warrants of arrest.

In its update, the ICC said it found "reasonable grounds to believe" that Netanyahu and Gallant "bear criminal responsibility" for alleged crimes.

These, the court said, include "the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts".

It is the first time a sitting leader of a major Western ally has been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity by a global court of justice.

Source: <https://news.sky.com/story/home-secretary-refuses-to-say-if-uk-would-arrest-netanyahu-after-icc-arrest-warrant-13258193> I'm an Immigration Lawyer. We Need To Prepare for Trump's Deportation Machine | Opinion



I'm an Immigration Lawyer. We Need To Prepare for Trump's Deportation Machine | Opinion

By Alina Das

Like many immigration lawyers, I spent four years under the first Trump administration in strange places. On the floor of JFK airport with my laptop during the rollout of the Muslim ban. In a church as ICE waited outside to arrest an immigrant rights leader. At socially distanced protests in front of remote immigration detention centers as COVID-19 spread inside. I know from experience that immigrant communities, organizers, and attorneys are prepared to respond to Trump's day-one policies. But I also know that if we wait until day one, it will already be too late.

The resistance 1.0 required all of our resources. First and foremost, it required our people. Immigrant activists led the charge against the Trump administration and faced heavy retaliation as a result. Trump's efforts to deport them and their loved ones was sprawling and chaotic. It would be a missed opportunity to not do everything we can now to protect as many people as possible before Trump takes office.

Protection isn't easy. Many of the 28 million people in mixed-status families living in the United States have no pathway for their loved ones to apply for status or citizenship. Congress has not fundamentally changed federal immigration laws since its harsh 1996 reforms, which created the deportation machinery we have today. But there are some safety valves: Some immigrants do have valid applications for status, waivers, and pardons in the pipeline. Others may benefit from extensions of temporary protections. The Biden administration should process every eligible application and extend protection to as many people as possible before the inauguration. The wheels of bureaucratic justice

need to spin faster over the coming weeks.

States and localities, too, must act quickly to reexamine their role in the deportation machine. No one can pretend to be unaware of what's coming. During the first Trump administration, federal immigration officials coopted state and local resources to enact its harshest policies. As longtime community members were rounded up, counties questioned whether their jail space should be used to hold Trump's latest targets. Small towns were left to pick up the pieces after factory workers were deported. Tom Homan, whom Trump recently tapped to lead his mass deportations and border operations, infamously told undocumented immigrants to look over their shoulders and engaged in community raids. He additionally promises to bring back large-scale workplace raids and is encouraging people to self-deport. States and localities will bear the burden of these policies and their consequences.

States and localities have options to protect their residents. Many have enacted or are considering legislation to prevent community resources from being coopted for deportation. California is leading the way by convening a special legislative session to strengthen its laws across several domains. Trump promises bold change. States and localities need to be bolder.

Communities have a lot to gain when their local and state elected officials draw clear lines between what happens locally and federal immigration enforcement. Studies have shown that modest steps can make communities safer and protect local economies. Most importantly, with the new Trump era, such legislation allows state and local officials to avoid entanglement with messy federal immigration policies over which they have no control. It protects states and localities from liability for immigration schemes like federal "detainers," which ask local law enforcement to hold immigrants for deportation at their own expense without a judicial warrant. It allows states and localities to focus on providing legal assistance and a safety net for families as programs like Deferred Act for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status come under threat.

Some may be tempted to wait and see what the second Trump administration brings. But we know too much about what Trump has done in the past to not take his day-one promises seriously. Strong immigrant communities are a vital part of this country. Immigrants have been seeking protection from the Biden administration and advocating for pro-immigrant legislation in town halls and state legislatures across the country. Now is the time to act.

Alina Das is a professor at New York University Law School, where she co-directs the Immigrant Rights Clinic and is a Public Voices Fellow. She is the author of *No Justice in the Shadows: How America Criminalizes Immigrants*.

The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.

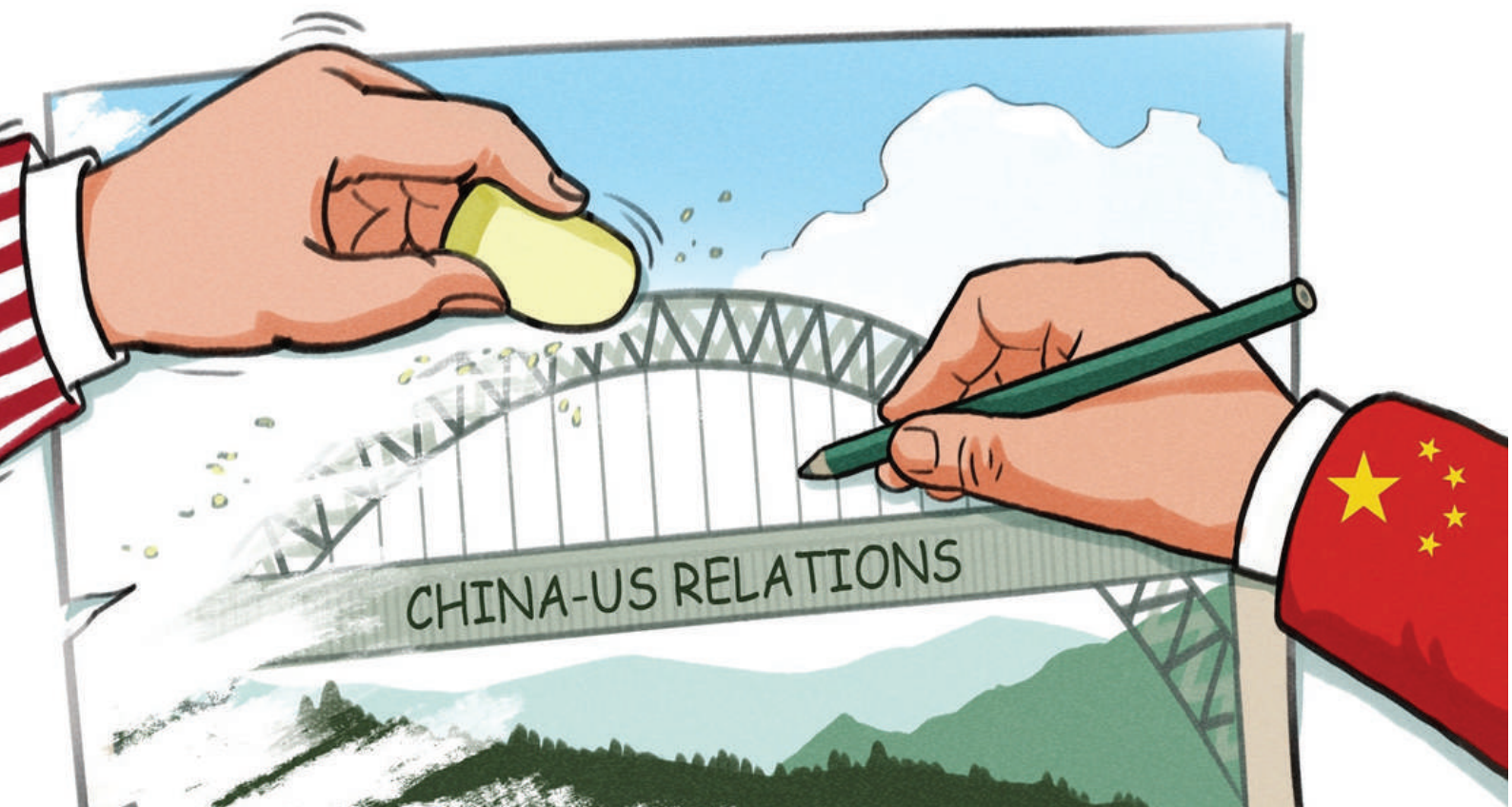
Source:<https://www.newsweek.com/im-immigration-lawyer-we-need-prepare-trumps-deportation-machine-opinion-1988872>

What should Washington reflect on US defense minister's 'regret'?: Global Times editorial

By Global Times

In the latest response to the absence of a meeting between Chinese and US defense ministers on the sidelines of the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defense, said the responsibility lies entirely with the US side. Wu said the US cannot undermine China's core interests by selling arms to Taiwan island on the one hand while pretending that nothing happened and seeking to engage in military exchanges with China on the other. He urged the US to immediately correct its mistakes, earnestly respect China's core interests, and create favorable conditions for high-level military exchanges between the two sides. Previously, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin complained about the Chinese side's refusal to meet with its defense official, expressing "regret" and saying that "it was unfortunate" and "is a setback for the whole region."

The US perhaps knows better than anyone else why the Chinese side "refused to meet with its official." Just last month, the US Department of Defense approved \$2 billion in arms sales to the island of Taiwan. This, the largest arms sale to the island under the Joe Biden administration, includes weapons, such as advanced surface-to-air missile defense systems and radar systems. Many US media outlets have noted that the missile defense system "has been battle-tested in Ukraine" - what that means is self-explanatory. China has repeatedly made it clear to the US that the Taiwan question is the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations. Despite this, the Pentagon insisted on standing on the periphery of China's red line and continuing to provoke China, instead of creating the conditions for dialogue. Some people in the US even act innocent: They talk about



“dialogue,” but what they do is create a “communication” in the sense of “I can hit you but you can’t hit me back.” China will never tolerate such behavior.

Since the beginning of this year, the defense ministers of China and the US have had face-to-face communication, while the China-US Defense Policy Coordination Talks, the working group meeting of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement and the theatre-level commander talks have resumed one after another. If the US side really is trying to blame “China’s lack of willingness to communicate,” how can these interactions be explained?

On the one hand, the US continues to undermine China’s interests, creating trouble regarding the Taiwan question and the South China Sea issue. On the other hand, it emphasizes the so-called “crisis management” by presenting itself as “responsible” - It claims it seeks dialogue with the Chinese side, but still publicly shifts the blame to China and gives it the label of being “unwilling to communicate.” This type of performance was quite a failure, and the fact that almost no regional country has responded to such an “awkward performance” from Austin actually says it all. This is not the first time that this kind of manipulation has occurred, and its purpose has long been clear to the international community.

During this meeting, China’s proposals, such as “building a closer security community,” were widely welcomed by participating countries, with many seeking dialogues with China. In recent days, China has held discussions with defense officials from Malaysia, Thailand, India, Japan, and others. Notably, after the much-anticipated China-India defense ministers’ meeting, India’s Defense Minister Rajnath Singh described the talks as “extremely productive” on social media, stating that both sides “agreed to work together towards a roadmap for rebuilding mutual trust and understanding.” During the 14th China-ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Informal Meeting, ASEAN countries also expressed their desire to further enhance pragmatic security cooperation with China. A Global Times editorial last year remarked that China’s diplomacy is very busy and has no time to receive insincere people. The current situation is no different.

The critical importance of military dialogue in China-US relations is undeniable and is often referred to as the last “safety valve” between the two nations. The purpose of such dialogue is to promote cooperation, build trust and resolve misunderstandings. China has consistently advocated addressing issues through dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and has followed through with this approach. Why, then, can so many countries successfully engage in talks with China’s defense minister, while the US cannot? Shouldn’t this prompt some serious reflection on the part of the US? We hope the US can tone down its “awkward performances” and focus more energy and effort on genuinely advancing regional peace and stability.

What truly constitutes the region’s well-being, and what represents its setbacks? At the 11th ADMM-Plus, the Chinese side called for the firm consolidation of ASEAN centrality and support for the improvement and upgrading of the existing cooperation framework, opposing “starting all over again” or creating “small circles”; we should firmly maintain the unity of regional countries and oppose the introduction of bloc politics and camp confrontation into the region; we are firmly committed to resolving issues through dialogues, and oppose provoking disputes, resorting to force, ganging up or even soliciting external forces.

This reflects the common aspirations of countries in the region. Regional nations can clearly see who is sincerely contributing to peace and who is promoting division and confrontation in the name of peace.

Source: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202411/1323632.shtml>

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SNOBELN:**Trudeau is going to get Trumped***By John Snobelen*

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Rahm Emanuel once opined that governments should never let a good crisis go to waste. Unfortunately, it seems the Trudeau government didn't get that message.

The election of Donald Trump is nothing less than a crisis for the comfortable folks who occupy the deep cocoons of United States federal bureaucracies. From education to health care, change is coming.

On the global stage Trump is a disruptor. He continues to threaten friend and foe alike, ultimately leaving the people who whisper in the ears of world leaders to ponder, over late-night whiskys, just how crazy he really is.

Against this backdrop, Trudeau and his crew reassure Canadians not to worry, they've got this. Heck, they have started up a cabinet committee on bilateral relations and thrown Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland into the battle.

By golly, they backed this Trump fellow down the last time he was president. Or so the rhetoric goes.

Which means the Trudeau government hasn't got a clue. Trump 2.0 is a completely different ride.

Donald Trump is a man in a hurry. He has been battling for four years to return to the White House and this time he knows his way around the place. In 2016 he was a stranger in a strange town. When he is sworn in as the 47th president he will be the dominate force in global politics.

Trump must act fast. There will be no Trump 3.0. After the 2026 mid-term elections, Trump will be a lame duck president. Until then a hurricane of change is coming.

The first Trump presidency was less prepared, less focused and ultimately overtaken by a pandemic. The Trudeau team managed to mount a charm offensive that produced a trade agreement we could live with. Those tactics won't work this time.

Trump sees Canada as a protectionist country that demands free access to American markets while freeloading on America's military might. Trouble is, he's right.

Which puts Trudeau in a bit of a pickle. Canada is not, thanks largely to the Trudeau government, in a position of strength.



It's hard to argue you are for free trade while defending tradewalls around a gaggle of protected industries that run the gamut from milk to cellphones. It's hard to get anyone to believe you intend to meet NATO commitments when you have already declared you won't. And it's hard to hold an economy together battling the headwinds of massive government debt, onerous restrictions on natural resources, stagnant bureaucracies, high taxes, and a dollar the world values at 70 cents.

The Trudeau strategy, if it can be called that, is to use Trump as a foil against the Conservatives and attempt to survive the next two years only a little worse off. Everything his government does is viewed through the lens of a desperate need to hold on to power. This is Trudeau's ultimate weakness in a time of change. He is reactive, not proactive, and his timelines are ridiculously short.

The times call for leadership that embraces the challenge of change. We need a government that is building prosperity for the next two decades, not the next election cycle.

Trump represents a one-time opportunity to examine how Canadians are affected by our protectionist ways, focus on a long-term trade strategy, get our fiscal house in order, and clean up our global commitments.

But sadly, we do not have that kind of leadership and Trudeau is about to get Trumped.

Source: <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/snobelen-trudeau-is-going-to-get-trumped>



Braid: Trudeau saves Christmas from the tax Grinch, but can he save himself?

By Don Braid

Ho, ho, ho? More like ha, ha, ha to see a shameless, cheesy effort to extract the federal Liberals from a political pickle

Thank you, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Canada needed a belly laugh and you came through.

Axing the GST on Christmas trees is so shameless, so hilariously cheesy, so predictably Trudeau, that one can only hoot at this latest effort to climb out of the political pit he dug for the Liberals.

The GST will be lifted from Dec. 14 until Feb. 15 on almost anything a family might buy at Christmas, including food, some booze, toys, restaurant meals (also takeout), snacks, toddler car seats and much more.

Diapers aren't exactly a Christmas item, but they get plenty of seasonal use and are therefore exempt.

The GST move will deprive the federal treasury of \$1.6 billion. Another measure, a spring payment of \$250 for everyone earning under \$150,000 a year, will cost a stunning \$4.6 billion.

That pre-election giveaway is expected to cover 18.7 million Canadians, the entire remnants of the middle class.

The whole program is the Liberals' gasping effort to get some traction with voters. They also hope to spike the Conservatives' big gun, the demand to abolish the carbon tax.

It's hard for Leader Pierre Poilievre to argue against any tax cut when he spends half his time demanding one. But he calls this "a two-month tax trick" and points to big carbon tax increases still to come.

Many hard-pressed Canadians will happily take the break, even if they sneer at the cynicism.

In Alberta the benefit is five per cent, the GST amount, but the federal measure also covers Harmonized Sales Tax in other provinces. Ontarians will suddenly pay 13 per cent less for scores of items.

Early reaction from a sampling of merchants is that overall sales could increase, although

people might hold off buying until the break takes effect Dec. 14 (if it passes in the Commons.)

Stores could see a madhouse rush in the 10 days before Christmas.

Merchants will be expected to go into their systems and remove items suddenly exempted from the GST.

In Calgary, Owl's Nest Books co-owner Judith Duthie says it shouldn't be difficult to delete books and puzzles, two of the store's key items. After a quick look around the store, she realized that almost everything she sells will be exempt.

But larger stores selling many types of items will have a bigger job figuring out what to exempt. The federal guide — titled *More money in your pocket: A tax break for all Canadians* — is almost insanely detailed and complicated.

Just a few examples of your federal civil service at work on the hundreds of exempted items: "Children's diapers: meaning a product designed for babies or children and that is a diaper, a diaper insert or liner, a training pant, or a rubber pant designed for use in conjunction with any of those items."

They're clear on one thing: a diaper must be a diaper.

Further: "Candies; confectionary classed as candy or goods sold as candies (e.g., candy floss, chewing gum, and chocolate); fruits, seeds, nuts or popcorn coated or treated with candy, chocolate, honey, molasses, sugar, syrup, or artificial sweeteners."

"Chips, crisps, puffs, curls, or sticks (e.g., potato chips, corn chips, cheese puffs, potato sticks, bacon crisps, and cheese curls), popcorn, brittle pretzels, and salted nuts or seeds."

I envisage a room full of officials debating the meaning of the cheese puff.

This government wants your family to snack its way through Christmas. Diabetes measures to follow.

Books are exempt from GST/HST, but with many side definitions and caveats, including the exclusion from tax relief of children's colouring books and other items that might encourage creativity.

Alberta government wonks had a scornful look at the rules Wednesday afternoon. One pointed out that buyers might return gifts they've already bought, hoping to buy again for less on Dec. 14.

He may be right. This could be chaos, especially in high GST/HST provinces.

The Liberals appear to have put as much work into this, although not better work, than they did with major legislation like the deeply flawed Impact Assessment Act.

This is trivial by comparison, but for the Liberals even more meaningful. It's about buying another minority government.

With that in mind, enjoy your tax-free "Christmas trees or similar decorative trees, whether natural or artificial."

Source: <https://calgaryherald.com/news/don-braid-justin-trudeau-gst-tax-cut-political-future>

Opinion | Canada has medicalized death – yet another reason we are getting assisted dying wrong

By Rick Salutin

Medically assisted death has surprisingly emerged as one of the signature issues of our time and Canada is playing an unexpected role. We are the model of how not to do it. Most criticism centres on the slippery slope argument: how slack we've been about who may qualify and how unrigorous the decision-making process can be. I want to pile on by considering some broader issues.

I mean the way the process has been medicalized and professionalized beyond what may've been necessary. One firsthand account, for instance, says, "the compassionate and professional nurse practitioner who provided MAID encouraged us to 'come closer' at the moment of (a parent's) death." This is spoken in praise and I understand how some people nod sympathetically. But others will find it intrusive. Is there no way to do this thing without a credentialed outsider in a kind of priestly or even master of ceremonies role?

That's hard to picture when you think about the injection involved but in fact there's an alternative. Many places with assisted dying use an "oral protocol," either alongside or instead of injection, where the person receives a package of meds that can be self-administered orally, surrounded only by family and other intimates. It's extremely rare in Canada. In 2021 just seven of 10,064 deaths happened that way. But elsewhere, like Oregon or California in the U.S., it's far more frequent.

Does it matter beyond the issue of intrusion? Probably. In those U.S. states, about 35 per cent didn't use the prescriptions or meds they had. Why? At least partly because it opened a space to introspect is surely a choice able to change only about two per requests. Why? degree, from a sense and awkwardness already being and having taken that sound strange? underestimate the or embarrassment at behaviour.



and reconsider. This people should be minds on yet here cent withdrew their Perhaps to some of embarrassment about the doctor booked or present such trouble. Does Not to me. Don't role of awkwardness every level of human

Eliminate those concerns and patients will often feel freer to reweigh and reconsider their options right up to the last moment. It's why it's been suggested that oral meds should be the "default method" in this area.

From here on I'm going to get pretty speculative, but it seems to me that this is more of a human situation than it is a medical one. Death existed before modern medicine and it had to be dealt with in existential and spiritual ways as well as practically. It was about meeting your maker, there was no life without death and vice versa, it wasn't primarily a medical sub-specialty. It's been a while now since most people died at home and lay there afterwards. People saw it frequently then and made their peace with it. They didn't have to ponder whether their kids should be kept away from open caskets or even funerals.

We now live in a highly medicalized reality and it's for good reason: the achievements of modern medicine have been one of the few highlights in the human parade. I am one of the literally living examples of those epic feats. But anything can get over magnified, the normal human MO is to overshoot. Last week, the New York Times interview on Canada's MAID experience spoke with a B.C. doctor as if no one else might have useful insights. It's trended that way since young Dr. Kildare on radio through to the latest "Grey's Anatomy." If there's a doctor in the house, the spotlight will gravitate toward them. I suppose it's also part of the enduring human trait to create idols and worship them, and then sometimes backtrack to restore a proper perspective.

(I am indebted for much of the detail here to the research of Gideon Salutin, who works at a think tank in the UK and also happens to be my son.)

Source: https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/canada-has-medicalized-death-yet-another-reason-we-are-getting-assisted-dying-wrong/article_07f1de94-a83b-11ef-bc48-a3c9f27822b5.html



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Canada clashes scare Punjabis abroad, kin pray for safety

By Neel Kamal

BATHINDA: Canada's Khalistani-Hindu altercations, from Brampton to Malton and Surrey, have left many Indians and temporary visa holders, especially those from Punjab, fearing for their safety and their families back home worried.

The conflict sparked by an attack on a Hindu Mahasabha temple in Brampton city of Canadian province Ontario's Greater Toronto Area underscores divisions around the demand for Khalistan and its impact on Canada's multicultural communities.

Many in Brampton and Surrey feel these clashes could strain social cohesion among various Indian diaspora groups. Punjab's Rohit Kumar, who is on a work permit in Brampton, said: "We are highly concerned. Incidents such as these only worsen the perception that we are creating unrest here, and that will cause more problems for us."

Kulwinder Singh, who has been involved in peaceful protests for extending work permits, emphasised the potential long-term consequences of the violence on community relations. Calling for unity among communities, Kulwinder said: "While we focus on securing our future in Canada, incidents like these could affect our ability to integrate."

Back in Punjab, Amit Mittal, whose son lives in Surrey, requested the Canadian authorities to manage these recurring conflicts carefully. "These events have ripple effects that impact the safety of our children staying abroad," Mittal said, also calling on the Indian govt to push for protection of Punjabis in Canada.

The rising tensions highlight the delicate balance within Canada's diverse immigrant communities and the need for careful intervention to prevent further discord.

These escalating tensions between pro-Khalistan supporters and opposition groups make migrants from Punjab anxious to save their reputation. For those struggling to extend their work permits, like Brampton store worker Jatinder Singh - whose permit expires next month - a dented image could be disastrous. "These disruptive elements could fracture Canada's social harmony and create unrest back home, where longstanding regional disputes remain unresolved," Jatinder added.

Source: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/canada-clashes-scare-punjabis-abroad-kin-pray-for-safety/amp_articleshow/114959110.cms

Major discovery on origin of writing in birthplace of civilization

By Julia Musto



The four original inventions of writing are recognized in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the Mayan culture

Researchers have made another major stride in understanding humanity's origins of writing. In Mesopotamia, the birthplace of civilization, the earliest known writing system started around 3,000 BCE.

Developed by the Sumerians and written on clay tablets, the first cuneiform is largely sourced back to the urban city of Uruk, or modern day Iraq. Thousands of tablets have since been unearthed, as well as small stone cylinder seals that were often used as signatures.

Now, academics at Italy's University of Bologna have identified links between the designs engraved on these 6,000-year-old cylinders and pictographs in proto-cuneiform script – which came before cuneiform – that emerged in Uruk.

“We wanted to see whether the traditional explanation of how writing was born in Mesopotamia in Uruk in the fourth millennium is really valid,” Professor Silvia Ferrara, the lead researcher, told The Independent on Monday.

The work was published Tuesday in the journal *Antiquity*.

Ferrara said that the findings add to previous research, which found that tokens were the devices that led to the possibility of writing.

The clay tokens came in multiple sizes, and are believed to have been shaped like the commodities of daily life.

Ferrara said they are geometric and don't have iconic imagery like these seals whereas the signs of the proto-cuneiform writing system start off as being being very iconographic: “They resemble things.”

“We realized that a number of images on the cylinder seals actually do resemble signs of the

proto-cuneiform writing system that were used a couple of centuries later,” she said.

“Cylinder seals that are part of a network of exchanges between Uruk and other cities in its precinct ... were a responsible mechanism for the creation of writing.”

These findings mark the first time there’s been a link between the cylinder seal system and the invention of writing. The seals were also used as an accounting system, tracking various agricultural and textile goods.

Co-authors and research fellows Kathryn Kelley and Mattia Cartolano worked alongside Ferrara. Kelley explained that they wanted to understand what encouraged people to leap into a writing system.

“We wanted to try to establish the other kind of relationship from seals, originally prehistoric sealing technology, into writing,” she said. “And, that’s the link. The crucial link that we’re presenting in the paper is a first concrete set of a few signs where we can explicitly say: these are there before writing and they’re used in similar ways and they have some sort of semantic association that is carried over into the invention of writing.”

Ferrara said that the researchers are not saying that the seals are the only source for writing. The findings give nuance to human understanding of the practice’s origins.

“But, we are showing some very concrete evidence that pre-literate image traditions, and in this case seals, are part of the stimulus for moving the information technology in a different direction,” she said.

The four original inventions of writing are in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the South American Mayan culture. There may, however, be another source. There are cases in modern India and Pakistan and Easter Island. Both systems remain undeciphered.

“And, for instance, with the case of Easter Island, we actually have more than indirect evidence right now that leads us to think that this is in fact the fifth invention of writing in the world,” Ferrara said.

Source:<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/origin-of-writing-discovery-mesopotamia-b2642276.html>



Son of Norway's Crown Princess Is Arrested on Suspicion of Rape

By Isabella Kwai

Marius Borg Hoiby, the stepson of Crown Prince Haakon of Norway, was arrested on Monday. His lawyer denied the accusation and said his client was cooperating with the authorities.

The eldest son of Norway's crown princess was arrested on suspicion of rape on Monday, the authorities in Oslo said, the latest accusation in a scandal that has roiled the country's royal family.

Marius Borg Hoiby, a son of Crown Princess Mette-Marit, was taken into custody on a preliminary rape charge on Monday evening, the police in Oslo said in a news release. The authorities offered few details but said he had violated a section of Norway's penal code that applies to "sexual intercourse with someone who is unconscious or for other reasons unable to resist the act."

His lawyer, Oyvind Bratlien, said in an email that Mr. Borg Hoiby was not guilty of the rape accusation.

Mr. Borg Hoiby, 27, has no title or official duties in Norway's royal family; his mother married Crown Prince Haakon, the heir to the Norwegian throne, in 2001.

Mr. Borg Hoiby, who was 4 when his mother married into the royal family, was once known affectionately as "Little Marius." In recent years, his behavior toward women has come under scrutiny, including accusations that he abused three women with whom he had been in relationships.

He was arrested in August on charges accusing him of bodily harm and damage in an episode involving a different woman. After that arrest, Mr. Borg Hoiby issued an apology to NRK, in which he admitted to causing bodily harm and destroying objects in an apartment while he was under the influence of alcohol and cocaine. He said he would seek treatment for substance abuse.

Two other women have also publicly accused Mr. Borg Hoiby of physically and psychologically abusing them while they were dating him.

Hege Salomon, a lawyer representing the woman whom the authorities have accused Mr. Borg Hoiby of raping, said that the police initiated the case, and that her client was

cooperating with the investigation. Ms. Salomon said that the woman, who was in her 20s, had not previously known Mr. Borg Hoiby.

“She is going through hard times due to this case,” Ms. Salomon said in an email. “She is not a public person and hopes to keep her privacy.”

Mr. Borg Hoiby is being detained, the police said, adding that the authorities had searched his residence in Skaugum, an estate that is the official home of Norway’s crown prince and crown princess. The family was not notified of the arrest beforehand, Crown Prince Haakon said on Tuesday while on a visit to Jamaica as part of a United Nations program. He said his stepson was facing “serious charges,” adding that he trusted the authorities and the judiciary to do their jobs.

Crown Prince Haakon’s engagement to Mette-Marit Tjessem Hoiby, a former waitress with a high school education and a rumored past of attending wild parties, shocked Norwegians when it was announced in 2000. The Crown Princess publicly apologized for her “wild life” before the wedding and said that she condemned drug use. Norwegians have since come to see her in a more positive light.

The crown princess’s other children, Princess Ingrid Alexandra and Prince Sverre Magnus, are second and third in line to succeed their grandfather, King Harald V, 87.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/19/world/europe/norway-crown-princess-son-rape-arrest.html>

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May Allah be with you - Amen

An Ahmadi Muslim in Germany has been awarded the Civil Award for Democracy and Human Rights 2024

Kamran Ahmad Malik, an Ahmadi Muslim from Raunheim, has been awarded the highest Civil Award for Democracy and Human Rights in the year 2024 by the Hessen district of Gross-Gerau, Germany for his 20 years' social and welfare services.



Mr. Malik is the son of Mr. Arshad Ahmad Shahbaz, Deputy Chairman of the Foreigners' Advisory Council of Darmstadt. The civil award ceremony was held on November 11, 2024, in the hall of the Gross-Gerau district, in the state of Hessen. The District Chief Administrator Mr. Thomas Will presented the civil award to Mr. Kamran Ahmad Malik and acknowledged his social and welfare services.

The event was attended by the head of the city, heads of German organizations and other dignitaries of the city in large numbers. While speaking, they also mentioned his major works and in the estimation of the city administration, Kamran Malik is commendable for highlighting the importance of peace, love for mankind, human rights and mutual respect and dialogue between all parties. A hardworking and indispensable pillar of the society for others to emulate. Kamran Ahmad Malik's other philanthropic works include charity walks, interfaith dialogue, social and human rights, organizing tree plantations, visiting old-people's homes and providing food in refugee shelters.

He also served in providing his services for organising charity walk programs under Ahmadiyya-Muslim-Jamaat to support earthquake victims in Turkey and war-affected people in Lubny/Ukraine and for local welfare and educational institutions and a part of it would go to Humanity First. He has also been instrumental in purchasing from the city administration a plot of 2700 square meters for a mosque in the city.

Kamran Ahmad Malik reciprocated to them, first thanking his parents for instilling in him the values of love and sympathy towards his fellow human-beings and to live up by the Ahmadiyya Motto "Love for all, Hatred for none".

Then he thanked the District Chief Administrator Mr. Thomas Will, Mayor of the city Mr. David Rendel, the head of the social affairs & education department Mrs. Kerstin Jühe and the Senior City Councilor Mrs. Dorothee Herberich for their kind words of appreciation and support.

The guests who attended this prestigious event were served international cuisine, which was highly appreciated. This was well received by the Pakistani Muslim community with their heads held high.

Unregulated AI Expansions: A Growing Threat to the spread of dangerous falsehoods, and many more



By: Muhammad Shahbaz Ali Advocate

AI permeates very quickly across almost every walk of life—it changes working, communication, and interaction norms. The speed of AI development has raced so fast that the regulatory efforts have remained several steps behind many issues that current laws would not cover. Regulatory gaps in AI create vulnerabilities that are likely to lead to serious ethical, social, and legal challenges.

One very key area is the advancement of deepfake technology. Deepfakes use AI to generate videos and audio that are extremely lifelike but completely fabricated. Even though these are applied in entertainment and education sectors, they have been grossly misused for malicious purposes which comprise political misinformation campaigns, manipulation of public opinion, character defamation, and disinformation. Unfortunately, most of the regulatory frameworks pertaining to Pakistan and Singapore do not particularly provide any remedies for this misuse of deepfakes, and the victims are left with limited choices.

Thus, it is also transforming journalism and social media through AI. It brings forth the potential to create articles, posts, and multimedia with algorithms, often indistinguishable from human creation but again a source of spreading-in accurate information. There are no clear rules to ensure the accuracy and impartiality of AI-generated news. It is a blank check for rampant misinformation and propaganda, eroding public trust in the media.

AI-based recommendation systems, as used by YouTube, TikTok and Netflix, etc also are the problem. These systems personalize content for users and hence design the consumption pattern and even shape the public opinion. These again all prove to be factories of disinformation and propaganda.

Most regulatory frameworks do not require transparency about the functioning of these algorithms and their possible bias. Such opaqueness leads to manipulative behaviors and maintains an echo chamber.

Another rapidly growing area is AI-powered targeted advertising. An AI system aggregates

millions of bits of user data and predicts consumer behavior, and for that, truly hyper-personalised advertisements -false, unregulated but fake content producers are used. While effective for businesses, these practices raise ethical questions regarding the privacy and consent of users. Many jurisdictions are no better than Pakistan in law when it comes to regulating how AI collects and uses personal data in advertising, hence leaving users at the mercy of exploitation.

Even content moderation on digital platforms, for instance, which AI has taken to an integral part, where algorithms are used for detecting and removing harmful content such as hate speech or misinformation. Errors often occur in content moderation ranging from wrongful removal to failing to detect harmful content. There is a glaring regulatory gap for such a mistake to remain unaddressed to ensure fairness and accuracy.

Generative AI systems like ChatGPT and DALL-E began generating text, images, and videos identical to human creativeness. Even as huge fame came for these creations with regards to innovative skills, there was however a question on intellectual property rights and even ethical usage. Without clear laws being set in place, there could be misuse -be it plagiarism, breach of copyright or perhaps the conception of something harmful.

The financial sector is not immune to the AI revolution, with systems being utilised for credit scoring, fraud detection, and algorithmic trading. However, much existing regulation fails to grapple with the extent of AI opacity in its decision-making processes. This then allows discriminatory lending practices and market manipulation unconstrained by limits, instilling a lack of trust in the financial institutions.

Governments, as well as private entities, are increasingly embracing technologies that employ artificial intelligence in surveillance, including facial recognition and behavior analysis. On one hand, security is benefited by such tools. However, there are strong grounds for privacy issues. Most countries do not have clear regulations over how these systems should be used, leaving room for possible misuse and violations of individual rights.

New ethical issues follow upon the heels of virtual AI-driven influencers and chatbots. These appear under the auspices of names such as Lil Miquela and customer service bots, which interact in ways the user blurs as human or artificial nature but where there is no law requiring transparency about their nonhuman nature. That means bad actors can use such tools more unilaterally to spread misinformation or manipulate consumers.

Lastly, self-driving cars and drones are engineered on the base of AI and highly tested and launched at rocket speed. Yet jurisdictions with hardly any regulations position liability for crashes caused by these vehicles or regulate standards of safety with them. This creates a legal void open to public safety thus wondering where to place the blame in case of failure.

Hence, this widespread and aggressive advancement of AI in all walks of life requires urgent regulations that are detailed and vision-oriented. Pakistan's Senate Bill and AI Policy, and Singapore's PDPA and AI strategy are not comprehensive AI regulatory laws to regulate fast growing AI driven

digital Media Technologies. From deepfakes to autonomous vehicles, these technologies are reshaping the society in profoundly impactful ways, but their runaway growth creates vulnerabilities that could lead to further significant damage by disinformation, misinformation and propaganda become fake news which pave ways for further damages. Governments must make it a high priority to create specific regulatory frameworks that address these challenges ensuring that AI is developed and deployed responsibly, that benefits everyone.

Air pollution from fires blamed for 1.5m deaths a year

PARIS: Air pollution caused by fires is linked to more than 1.5 million deaths a year worldwide, the vast majority occurring in developing countries, a major new study said on Thursday.

This death toll is expected to rise in the coming years as climate change makes wildfires more frequent and intense, according to a study in The Lancet journal.

The international team of researchers looked at existing data on “landscape fires”, which include both wildfires that rage through nature and planned fires such as controlled burns on farming land.

Around 450,000 deaths a year from heart disease were linked to fire-related air pollution between 2000 and 2019, the researchers said.

A further 220,000 deaths from respiratory disease were attributed to the smoke and particulates spewed into the air by fire.

From all causes around the world, a total of 1.53m annual deaths were associated with air pollution from landscape fires, according to the study.

More than 90pc of these deaths were in low and middle-income countries, it added, with nearly 40pc in sub-Saharan Africa alone.

The countries with the highest death tolls were China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Indonesia, and Nigeria.

A record amount of illegal burning of farm fields in northern India has been partly blamed for noxious smog that has recently been choking the capital New Delhi.

The authors of the Lancet study called for “urgent action” to address the huge death toll from landscape fires.

The disparity between rich and poor nations further highlights “climate injustice”, in which those who have contributed the least to global warming suffer from it the most, they added.

Some of the ways people can avoid smoke from fires — such as moving away from the area, using air purifiers and masks, or staying indoors — are not available to people in poorer countries, the researchers pointed out.

So they called for more financial and technological support for people in the hardest-hit countries.

The study was released a week after UN climate talks where delegates agreed to a boost in climate funding that developing countries slammed as insufficient.

It also came after Ecuador declared a national emergency over forest fires that have razed more than 10,000 hectares in the country’s south. The world has also been battered by hurricanes, droughts, floods and other extreme weather events during what is expected to be the hottest year in recorded history.

Source:<https://www.dawn.com/news/1875439/air-pollution-from-fires-blamed-for-15m-deaths-a-year>



Earth's second moon confirmed : Scientists discover new natural satellite orbiting our planet

By Samir Sebti

In a groundbreaking astronomical discovery, scientists have confirmed that Earth now has a second moon. This celestial companion, known as asteroid 2024 PT5, was captured by our planet's gravity on September 29, 2024. The revelation has sparked excitement in the scientific community and offers new opportunities for studying near-Earth objects.

Astronomers at the Complutense University of Madrid first spotted this intriguing event using a powerful telescope in Sutherland, South Africa. The tiny asteroid, measuring just 37 feet wide, has been temporarily ensnared by Earth's gravitational pull, transforming it into a mini-moon.

Richard Binzel, an astronomer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), explains, "These happen with some frequency, but we rarely see them because they're very small and very hard to detect. Only recently has our survey capability reached the point of spotting them routinely."

Earth's moon : 2,159 miles wide

Asteroid 2024 PT5 : 37 feet wide

Size difference : Earth's moon is over 300,000 times wider

Despite its small size, this temporary satellite provides valuable insights into our cosmic neighborhood and the dynamics of near-Earth objects.

The journey of Earth's new mini-moon

Asteroid 2024 PT5 belongs to the Arjuna asteroid belt, a group of space rocks that follow orbits similar to Earth's, approximately 93 million miles from the sun. Some Arjuna

asteroids can approach our planet at a close range of around 2.8 million miles, traveling at relatively low velocities of less than 2,200 miles per hour.

According to data from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory Horizons system, 2024 PT5's stay in Earth's orbit will be brief. The capture began at 3 :54 p.m. EDT on September 29, 2024, and is expected to end at 11 :43 a.m. EDT on November 25, 2024.

Carlos de la Fuente Marcos, a professor and mini-moon expert from the Complutense University, likens the asteroid's behavior to that of a window shopper. He states, "Asteroid 2024 PT5 will not describe a full orbit around Earth. You may say that if a true satellite is like a customer buying goods inside a store, objects like 2024 PT5 are window shoppers."

This celestial visitor's journey serves as a reminder of the dynamic nature of our solar system. While it won't remain in Earth's orbit for billions of years like our primary moon, its fleeting presence offers a unique opportunity for scientific study.

The significance of mini-moons in astronomical research

Mini-moons like 2024 PT5 provide scientists with valuable opportunities to study near-Earth objects up close. These temporary captures act as natural cosmic laboratories, offering insights into the composition of asteroids and the intricate workings of our solar system.

Binzel emphasizes the importance of these events, stating, "These temporary captures are natural cosmic laboratories. They help us understand the small bodies that come close to Earth and could be important for future space missions."

While mini-moons are too small and dim for most amateur astronomers to observe, they fall within the detection range of professional-grade telescopes. To spot 2024 PT5, one would need :

Equipment	Specifications
Telescope diameter	At least 30 inches
Detector	CCD or CMOS

The study of mini-moons contributes to our understanding of near-Earth asteroids and their potential impact on our planet. By analyzing these temporary satellites, scientists can refine their models of asteroid behavior and improve our ability to predict and mitigate potential collisions.

Future implications and ongoing research

As technology advances, researchers hope to study these fleeting visitors more closely. Future missions may even attempt to gather samples or test new spacecraft designs using mini-moons as targets.

The discovery of 2024 PT5 and other mini-moons highlights the ever-changing nature of our cosmic environment. It serves as a reminder that our solar system is a dynamic place, full of surprises and opportunities for scientific exploration.

While Earth's second moon may be temporary, its presence opens up new avenues for research and discovery. As we continue to scan the skies, who knows what other celestial wonders we might uncover ? The universe never ceases to amaze, and each new finding brings us one step closer to unraveling its mysteries.

Source: <https://dailygalaxy.com/2024/11/earths-second-moon-confirmed-scientists-discover-new-natural-satellite-orbiting-our-planet/>

Nigerian Catholic religious sister wins \$1.2 million Opus Prize

By Jude Atemanke

Sister Francisca Ngozi Uti, the founder and executive director of the Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI) in Abuja, Nigeria, has been named the laureate of the 2024 Opus Prize — a \$1.2 million award recognizing transformative humanitarian work.

In her address during the Nov. 14 award ceremony at Santa Clara University, a Jesuit university in Silicon Valley, the Nigerian member of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus (HHCJ) said that words could not express her joy.

“Did I ever imagine being nominated as the laureate? Honestly, no. Words seem inadequate to capture the depth of my joy. My heart overflows with gratitude,” Ngozi said.

“I never dreamed that the work my team and I have been doing in these remote communities would gain recognition not only within our state but beyond our nation’s borders crossing the Atlantic and reaching as far as the United States of America.”

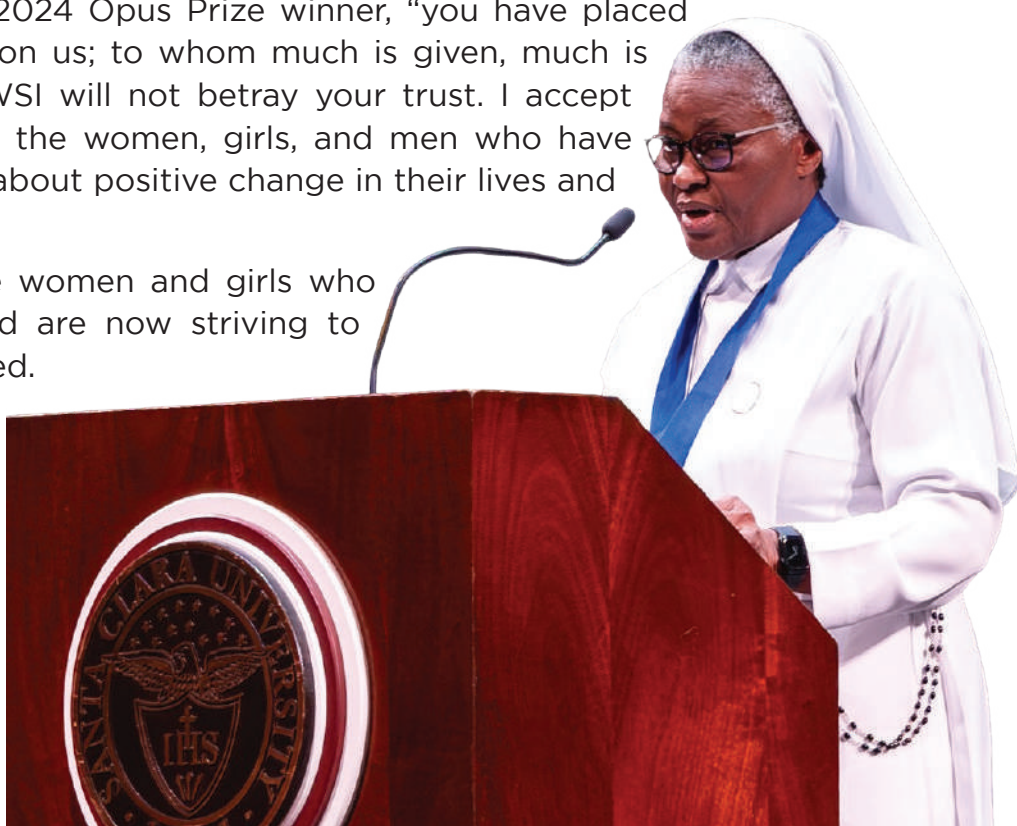
Ngozi thanked the Opus Prize jury, saying: “You believed and still believe in the work that my team and I do to alleviate the suffering and trauma of those marginalized through no fault of their own.”

By choosing CWSI as the 2024 Opus Prize winner, “you have placed a significant responsibility on us; to whom much is given, much is expected,” Ngozi said. “CWSI will not betray your trust. I accept this award on behalf of all the women, girls, and men who have partnered with us to bring about positive change in their lives and communities.”

“I remember especially the women and girls who have endured hardship and are now striving to rebuild their lives,” she added.

Reflecting on her ministry over the years, Ngozi credited her father for ensuring she received an education despite societal limitations.

“Thank you, Papa. Your sacrifice was not in vain,” she said.



She also paid homage to HHCJ foundress Mother Mary Charles Magdalene Walker. “From her life of courage, resilience, and faith, I learned to entrust myself to God, allowing him to lead while I follow,” she said.

Ngozi also thanked the staff of CWSI, HHCJ leadership, and all those who have contributed to her mission.

“To the past and present staff of CWSI who have made countless sacrifices out of love for God and humanity, I am deeply grateful,” she said.

Ngozi went on to congratulate her fellow Opus Prize finalists, including Jesuit Father Zachariah Presutti, founder and executive director of Thrive for Life Prison Project in New York, and Cătălin and Bianca Albu, the general manager and senior manager, respectively, for programs at Jesuit Refugee Service in Romania.

“This recognition is not just for me or CWSI. It is for every woman and girl whose resilience and courage inspire our mission. May God bless you abundantly for your generosity and support,” Ngozi said.

CWSI seeks to help women become politically aware, socially responsible, and economically independent for greater autonomy and parity with men.

The Abuja-based entity also advocates for the inclusion of women in government roles and for legal provisions to combat gender-based violence in five Nigerian states.

The late Bishop Paride Taban was the Opus Prize 2023 laureate. The bishop emeritus of South Sudan’s Diocese of Torit was honored posthumously for founding the Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron, where people from warring South Sudanese tribes live in harmony.

“Bishop Taban’s Holy Trinity Peace Village Kuron will receive the \$1 million prize that recognizes social entrepreneurship championing faith-filled change,” the Opus Prize Foundation and Villanova University announced last year in a press release.

This story was first published by ACI Africa, CNA’s news partner in Africa, and has been adapted by CNA.

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/amp/news/260539/nigerian-catholic-religious-sister-wins-1-dollars-2-cents-million-opus-prize>

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Time may be an illusion, new study finds

By Joseph Shavit

Scientists propose that time is a result of quantum entanglement, the mysterious connection between particles separated by vast distances

Time, long considered a fundamental aspect of our universe, might actually be an illusion stemming from quantum entanglement, according to a new study.

This idea presents a fresh perspective on the longstanding issue physicists face: the inconsistency of time in our best theories of the universe, which hinders the quest for a unified “theory of everything.”

Researchers propose that time is a result of quantum entanglement, the mysterious connection between particles separated by vast distances. Their findings, published in the journal *Physical Review A*, could offer a clue to solving the problem of time.

“There exists a way to introduce time which is consistent with both classical laws and quantum laws, and is a manifestation of entanglement,” explained Alessandro Coppo, a physicist at the National Research Council of Italy and the study’s lead author. “The correlation between the clock and the system creates the emergence of time, a fundamental ingredient in our lives.”

In quantum mechanics, time is a fixed phenomenon, an unchanging flow from past to present. It remains external to the ever-changing quantum systems it measures and can only be observed through changes in external entities, like the hands of a clock.

Conversely, Einstein’s theory of general relativity, which deals with larger objects like stars and galaxies, depicts time as intertwined with space, capable of warping and dilating under high speeds or strong gravitational fields. This discrepancy creates a significant conflict between our two best theories of reality, preventing the formulation of a coherent theory of everything.

“It seems there is a serious inconsistency in quantum theory,” Coppo said. “This is what we call the problem of time.”

To address this, the researchers revisited the Page and Wootters mechanism, a theory proposed in 1983. It suggests that time emerges through quantum entanglement between one object and another acting as a clock. In an unentangled system, time does not exist, and the universe appears frozen and unchanging.

Applying this mechanism to two entangled but noninteracting theoretical quantum states—a vibrating harmonic oscillator and a set of tiny magnets acting as a clock—the researchers found their system aligned perfectly with the Schrödinger equation, which predicts the behavior of quantum objects. Instead of traditional time, their version of the equation ran

according to the states of the tiny magnets.

While this concept isn't entirely new, the team's next step was groundbreaking. They repeated their calculations, assuming first that the magnet clock and then the harmonic oscillator were macroscopic objects. The equations simplified into those used in classical physics, suggesting that time's flow is a consequence of entanglement even on large scales.

"We strongly believe that the correct and logical direction is to start from quantum physics and understand how to reach classical physics, not the other way around," Coppo asserted.

Despite the intriguing possibilities, other physicists urge caution. They find the idea of the Page and Wootters mechanism fascinating but note that it has yet to produce testable results.

"Yes, it is mathematically consistent to think of the universal time as the entanglement between quantum fields and quantum states of 3D space," commented Vlatko Vedral, a professor of quantum information science at the University of Oxford, who was not involved in the work. "However, no one knows if anything new or fruitful will come out of this picture—such as modifications to quantum physics and general relativity, and corresponding experimental tests."

Despite these doubts, building theories of time from quantum mechanics might still be a promising approach, provided they can be validated through experiments.

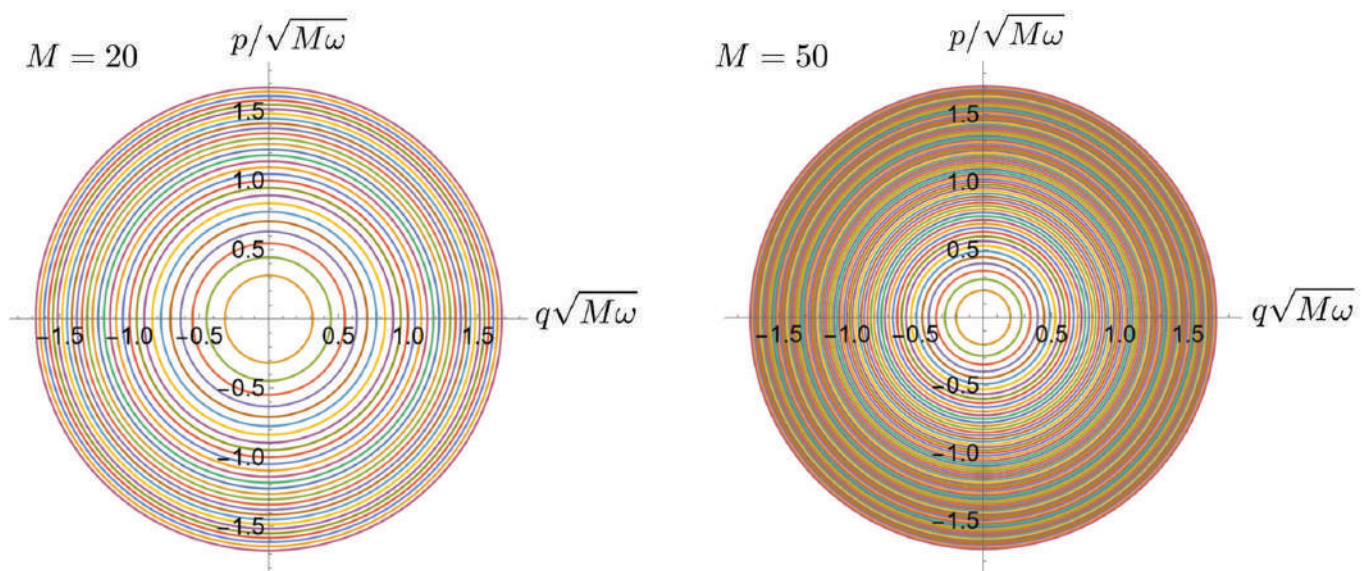
"Maybe there is something about entanglement where it plays a role," suggested Adam Frank, a theoretical physicist at the University of Rochester in New York, who was not involved in the study. "Maybe the only way to understand time is not from some God's-eye perspective, but from the inside, from a perspective of asking what is it about life that manifests such an appearance of the world."

This new perspective on time as an emergent property from quantum entanglement could open up new avenues for understanding the universe.

However, it remains crucial to develop these theories in ways that can be experimentally tested to bridge the gap between quantum mechanics and general relativity.

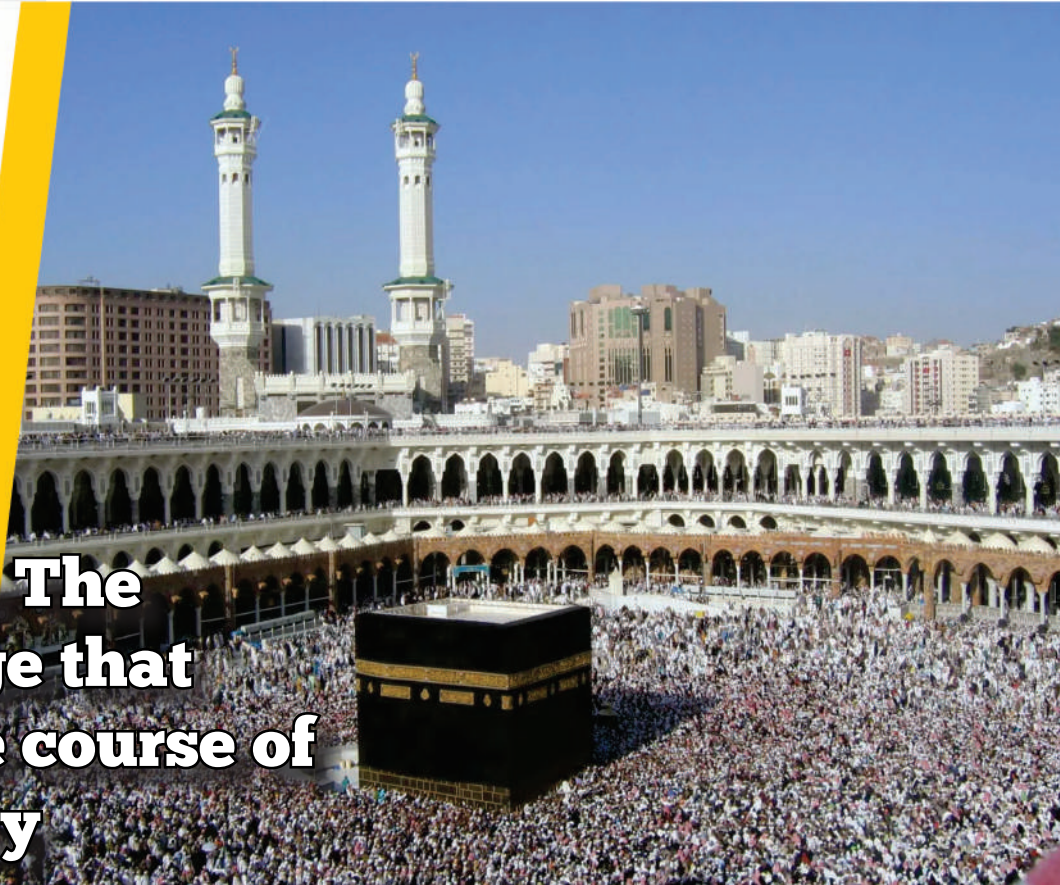
Note: Materials provided above by The Brighter Side of News. Content may be edited for style and length.

Source: <https://www.thebrighterside.news/discoveries/time-may-be-an-illusion-new-study-finds/>





Mecca 1979: The mosque siege that changed the course of Saudi history



It's four decades since a charismatic preacher and his followers staged an armed takeover of the Grand Mosque of Mecca and the holiest place in Islam became a killing field. The resulting siege, writes the BBC's Eli Melki, shook the Muslim world to its foundations and changed the course of Saudi history.

In the early hours of 20 November 1979, some 50,000 faithful from all over the world gathered for dawn prayers in the huge courtyard surrounding the sacred Kaaba in Mecca, Islam's holiest place. Among them mingled 200 men led by a charismatic 40-year-old preacher called Juhayman al-Utaybi.

As, the imam finished leading prayers, Juhayman and his followers pushed him aside and seized the microphone.

They had placed closed coffins in the centre of the yard, a traditional act of seeking blessings for the recently deceased. But when the coffins were opened, they revealed handguns and rifles, which were quickly distributed among the men.

One of them began to read a prepared speech: "Fellow Muslims, we announce today the coming of the Mahdi... who shall reign with justice and fairness on Earth after it has been filled with injustice and oppression."

For the pilgrims in the courtyard, this was an extraordinary announcement. In the hadiths - reports of what the Prophet Muhammad said or approved - the coming of the Mahdi, or divinely guided one, is foretold. He is described as a man endowed with extraordinary powers by God, and some Muslims believe he will usher in an era of justice and true belief.

The preacher, Khaled al-Yami, a follower of Juhayman, claimed that "countless visions have testified to the coming of the Mahdi". Hundreds of Muslims had seen him in their dreams, Yami said, and now he was in their midst. The Mahdi's name was Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Qahtani.

In an audio recording of the speech, Juhayman can be heard interrupting the speaker from time to time to direct his men to close the shrine's gates and take up sniper positions in its

tall minarets, which then dominated the city of Mecca.

“Attention brothers! Ahmad al-Lehebi, go up on the roof. If you see someone resisting at the gates, shoot them!”

According to an anonymous witness, Juhayman was the first to pay homage to the Mahdi, and immediately others started following his example. Cries of “God is great!” rang out.

But there was confusion too. Abdel Moneim Sultan, an Egyptian religious student who had got to know some of Juhayman’s followers, recalls that the Grand Mosque was full of foreign visitors who spoke little Arabic and did not know what was happening.

The sight of armed gunmen in a space in which the Koran strictly forbids any violence, and a few gunshots, also stunned many worshippers, who scrambled to reach any exits still left open.

“People were surprised at the sight of gunmen... This is something they were not used to. There is no doubt this horrified them. This was something outrageous,” says Abdel Moneim Sultan.

But in just an hour the audacious takeover was complete. The armed group was now in full control of the Grand Mosque, mounting a direct challenge to the authority of the Saudi royal family.

The men who took over the Grand Mosque belonged to an association called al-Jamaa al-Salafiya al-Muhtasiba (JSM) which condemned what it perceived as the degeneration of social and religious values in Saudi Arabia.

Flush with oil money, the country was gradually transforming into a consumerist society. Cars and electrical goods were becoming commonplace, the country was urbanising, and in some regions men and women began to mix in public.

But the JSM’s members continued to live an austere life, proselytising, studying the Koran and the hadiths, and adhering to the tenets of Islam as defined by the Saudi religious establishment.

Juhayman, one of the JSM’s founders - who hailed from Sajir, a Bedouin settlement in the centre of the country - confessed to his followers that his past was far from perfect. During a long evening around a fireplace in the desert, or a gathering in the house of one of his supporters, he would tell his personal story of fall and redemption to a captivated audience.

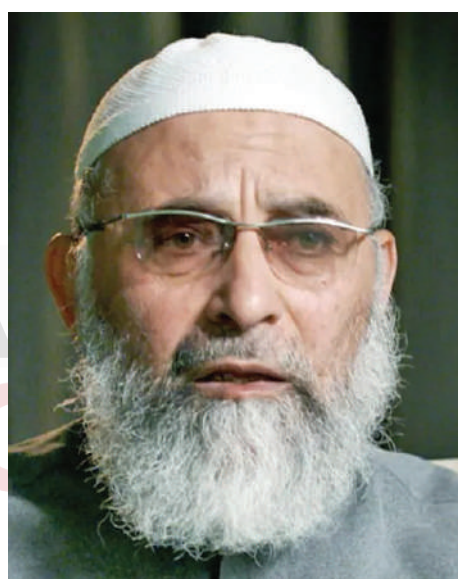
Usama al-Qusi, a religious student who frequented the group’s meetings, heard Juhayman say that he had been involved in “illegal trading, including drug smuggling”.

However, he had repented, found solace in religion and became a zealous and devoted leader - and many members of the JSM, especially the younger ones, fell under his spell.

Most of those who knew him, such as religious student Mutwali Saleh, attest of his force of personality as well as his devotion: “Nobody saw this man and didn’t like him. He was strange. He had what is called charisma. He was true to his mission, and he gave his whole life to Allah, day and night.”

However, for a religious leader he was poorly educated.

“Juhayman was keen to go to the isolated and the rural areas where Bedouins live,” Nasser



Abdel Moneim Sultan, a student in 1979, was a witness to the events

al-Hozeimi, a close follower, recalls. "Because his classical Arabic [the language mastered by all scholars of Islam] was weak and he had a strong Bedouin accent, he avoided addressing any educated audience to avoid being exposed."

On the other hand, Juhayman had served as a soldier in the National Guard, and his rudimentary military training proved important when it came to organising the takeover.

Eventually, the JSM began to clash with some Saudi clerics and a crackdown by the authorities ensued.

Juhayman fled to the desert, where he wrote a series of pamphlets criticising the Saudi royal family for what he considered it to be its decadence, and accusing clerics of colluding with it for earthly gains. He became convinced that Saudi Arabia had been corrupted and that only a heavenly intervention could bring salvation.

It was at this point that he identified the Mahdi as Mohammad Bin Abdullah al-Qahtani, a soft-spoken young preacher known for his good manners, devotion and poetry.

The hadiths talk of a Mahdi with a first name and father's name similar to the prophet's, and features outlined by a large forehead and a pronounced thin, aquiline nose. Juhayman saw all of this in al-Qahtani, but the supposed saviour himself was taken aback by the idea. Overwhelmed, he retreated into prayer.

Eventually, however, he emerged from his isolation convinced that Juhayman was right. He took on the role of Mahdi, and the alliance with Juhayman was sealed all the more tightly when Qahtani's older sister became Juhayman's second wife.

Conveniently, a few months before the siege, strange rumours spread that hundreds of Meccans and pilgrims had seen al-Qahtani in their dreams, standing tall in the Grand Mosque and holding the banner of Islam.

Juhayman's followers were convinced. Mutwali Saleh, a member of the JSM, recalls: "I remember the last meeting when a brother asked me, 'Brother Mutwali, what do you think about the Mahdi?' I said to him, 'Excuse me please, don't talk about this subject.' Then someone said to me, 'You are a silent devil. Brother, the Mahdi is real and he is Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Qahtani.'"

In the remote areas where he had sought refuge, Juhayman and his followers began to prepare for the violent conflict to come.

The Saudi leadership reacted sluggishly to the seizure of the Grand Mosque.

Crown Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz al-Saud was in Tunisia at the Arab League summit and Prince Abdullah, head of the National Guard - an elite security force tasked with protecting royal leaders - was in Morocco. It was left to the ailing King Khaled and Defence Minister Prince Sultan to co-ordinate a response.

The Saudi police at first failed to understand the scale of the problem and sent a couple of patrol cars to investigate, but as they drove up to the Grand Mosque they came under a hail of bullets.

Once the gravity of the situation became clear, units of the National Guard launched a hasty effort to retake control of the shrine. (To be continued...)

Source:<https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-50852379>

‘Most oppressed Muslim woman in the world’ now denied religious solace



By Clive Stafford Smith and Omar Suleiman

Why does the US Bureau of Prisons refuse to allow Dr Aafia Siddiqui visits from an imam?

We have recently – imam and lawyer – joined forces, along with so many unsung heroes, to demand respect for the humanity of Dr Aafia Siddiqui. She is often called the “Most Oppressed Muslim Woman in the World” – and with good cause. There is no other woman who went through the full US Rendition to Torture program. There is no other example of a case where a woman was abducted by the CIA and their Pakistani co-conspirators along with her three small children.

And is there a parent in the world who does not tremble at the fate that befell those kids? Suleman, aged 6 months, was apparently killed when he was dropped on his head during the abduction. The CIA has never let Aafia know, but this happened on March 30, 2003, in Karachi, so it seems unlikely that the child is still alive. Yet which fate would be worse for the mother – to know the infant who was so recently a part of your body is dead? Or to hold out a faint hope two decades later that he lives?

It might seem obvious that Suleman did die once you hear what our government – the US – did to the other two. Mariam, aged 3, was taken all the way to Afghanistan, a war zone, where her name was changed to Fatima and she was involuntarily put in a family of white Christian Americans for seven years. She would still be there but for former President Hamid Karzai, who later helped get her home.

Then there is Ahmed, who was taken to Kabul and put in prison, at the age of six! He was told his name henceforth was to be Ihsan Ali and that he would be killed if he said it was anything else. Ahmed and Mariam are both US citizens, and it is mind-boggling that the

CIA, sworn to uphold the US Constitution, would do this to two children from anywhere, let alone kids carrying US passports.

Aafia was herself taken to Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan where she endured five years of torture. Eventually, through an agonizing path, she ended up in FMC Carswell, a federal women's prison in Fort Worth, Texas, serving what is essentially a life sentence.

This article is not the forum in which to contest her guilt – whatever our well-founded doubts – so let us pretend she really did try to kill an American soldier, even though she was the only person to be shot. Regardless, it is a common thread in most faiths that we should remember those in distress, and that's part of what brings the two of us together in this struggle for Aafia. In the Quran we are told, "And they give food from their sustenance, in spite of their love for it, to the needy, the orphan, and the captive..." (Insaan "The Human" 76:8). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) famously taught that "no one of you believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" (Bukhari). In the Bible, a verse reads that we should "continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering". (Hebrews 13:3)

Empathy is a pronounced value in our traditions, and if ever there was someone who needs religious solace right now, it is Aafia Siddiqui. So when she told her volunteer lawyer (Clive Stafford Smith) that she had not had an imam during her 16 years in prison, let alone the five years of torture before that, Clive reached out to Imam Omar, who immediately agreed to visit her every couple of weeks to give her spiritual assistance.

This was months ago, and each time we chased up the prison authorities, they came up with a new reason to do nothing. First, they wanted their form filled out. We did that. Then they said they needed a driver's licence and proof of being an imam. Then they said they did not have the documents they needed, and we asked what else they needed. Months went by and they requested strange documentation that demonstrated they had no intention to facilitate Aafia's request.

Last month Clive's team demanded to know when this was going to get resolved. We were told nothing. Then this week we were told that they had denied Omar's right to help Aafia: "This memorandum is to advise of the denial of visiting for Imam Suleiman." The memorandum is dated September 26 – meaning it was written two months ago, but they had not bothered to tell us until now.

No reason is given. The Biden administration has laboured long and hard to alienate Muslim Americans in its blinkered support for Israel's war crimes in Gaza, but it is difficult to understand why this request would be denied. Is it because of other human rights advocacy? Could it be precipitated by previous tweets and protests demanding that there should be justice for Aafia? Or could it be that demanding an end to the atrocities against the Palestinian people has once again alienated us from yet another basic space in which to function?

Today Clive and his colleagues have filed a suit in federal court to force the issue, yet it should not take a lawsuit for the Carswell authorities to respect fundamental religious rights – they could just read the Bible, the Quran or maybe even just the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/11/21/excluding-faith-us-deny-imprisoned-dr-aafia-siddiqui-visits-from-an-imam>

Min Aung Hlaing accused of crimes against humanity over deportation and persecution of Rohingya minority

The chief prosecutor of the international criminal court (ICC) is seeking an arrest warrant for Myanmar's military leader, Min Aung Hlaing, for crimes against humanity over the deadly crackdowns against the country's Rohingya minority that drove hundreds of thousands to flee to Bangladesh.

Karim Khan said that "after an extensive, independent and impartial investigation" his office had concluded there were reasonable grounds to believe that the Myanmar junta chief "bears criminal responsibility for the crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution of the Rohingya committed in Myanmar and in part in Bangladesh".

A panel of three ICC judges must now rule on the prosecutor's request. More applications for arrest warrants will follow, the prosecutor's office said.

Tun Khin, a prominent Rohingya activist and the president of the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, welcomed the news as "huge step forward in the quest for justice".

In 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya were forced to flee their homes in Rakhine state and cross over the border to Bangladesh after an operation by the Myanmar military that UN investigators said was carried out with "genocidal intent".

Rohingya who fled across the border gave harrowing testimonies of mass rape, murder, and of torched homes. The events shocked the world, and for the past five years the ICC

ICC prosecutor seeks arrest warrant for Myanmar junta chief



By Rebecca Ratcliffe

prosecutor's office has been investigating the waves of violence that occurred during 2016 and 2017. Myanmar has denied accusations of genocide.

At the time of the killings, the western-backed politician Aung San Suu Kyi was Myanmar's democratically elected de facto leader. She was accused by rights groups of standing by while the army committed massacres. Her supporters claimed, however, that Myanmar's most famous politician was unable to stand up to the military.

Aung San Suu Kyi later defended her country against allegations of genocide at the UN's top court. In 2021, she was arrested when the military took power in a coup.

Tun Khin said the news brought "a rare day of celebration for the Rohingya". He said: "For decades the international community allowed the Myanmar military to violate international law against ethnic and religious minorities, without taking any action. This encouraged the Myanmar military to scale up abuses, including the genocide of the Rohingya. Today we have finally taken another step towards justice and accountability."

Almost 1 million Rohingya remain in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, in one of the world's biggest and most densely populated refugee camps, which is plagued by insecurity. Rohingya who live in Myanmar continue to face persecution and violence, not only from the Myanmar military but also, activists say, from the Arakan Army, which is fighting against the military for control of Rakhine state.

Nay San Lwin, a Rohingya political activist, said the prosecutor's application was long overdue. "We warmly welcome this move," he said, adding that he hoped an arrest warrant would be issued promptly. "We deserve justice, we want justice, only the international court can deliver justice for us," he said.

There is no set timeframe for the judge's decision but it generally takes about three months to rule on issuing an arrest warrant.

Matthew Smith, a co-founder and the chief executive of Fortify Rights, a human rights group, described Min Aung Hlaing as "one of the world's most notorious criminals".

"He's not only responsible for crimes against humanity against Rohingya but also for genocide and war crimes in Myanmar. He orchestrated the coup d'état in 2021 and the subsequent mass murder, imprisonment and other atrocities against people throughout the country," he said. "Min Aung Hlaing's victims span Myanmar's many ethnic groups and number in the tens of millions. He must be stopped and brought to justice."

Source:<https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/27/international-criminal-court-prosecutor-seeks-arrest-warrant-myanmar-military-leader-min-aung-hlaing>

Pakistani religious body declares using VPN is against Islamic law

By Sarah Zaman

Islamabad — Pakistan's top advisory body on religious affairs on Friday declared that using virtual private networks to access blocked content on the internet is against Shariah, or Islamic law.

The statement came as authorities deploy a nationwide firewall and push users to register VPNs with the state's media regulator, ostensibly to enhance cybersecurity and fight terrorism.

Critics say such measures, however, increase online surveillance, curb freedom of expression and hurt e-commerce.

Virtual private networks enable internet users to hide their identity and location, allowing them to maintain privacy and security and access online content that is blocked in their country.

The Council of Islamic Ideology said the technology was being used in Pakistan to access content prohibited according to Islamic principles or forbidden by law, including "immoral and porn websites or websites that spread anarchy through disinformation."

"Using VPNs to access blocked or illegal content is against Islamic and social norms, therefore, their use is not acceptable under Islamic law. It falls under 'abetting in sin,' " said the statement, quoting the council's chairman, Raghieb Naeemi.

The statement declared that any technology, including the internet, used to access "immoral or illegal activities is prohibited according to Islamic principles."

Earlier in the day, the Ministry of Interior sent a letter to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, or PTA, the country's independent media regulator, asking it to block all "illegal" VPNs, claiming terrorists were using the cyber tool.

"VPNs are increasingly being exploited by terrorists to facilitate violent activities and financial transactions in Pakistan," the letter said.

The ministry also pointed to the use of VPNs for viewing pornography.

"Pakistan is also considered as one of the leading [countries] in terms of [people] visiting porn sites using VPNs. However, these trends warrant prohibition of unauthorized VPNs

to address the critical threats,” the note added.

Along with using VPNs for online business and entertainment, many Pakistanis use the tool to access social media platform X, formerly Twitter, which remains mostly inaccessible since February’s controversial general elections.

According to court filings, the interior ministry ordered the PTA to suspend the platform “in the interest of upholding national security, maintaining public order and preserving the integrity of our nation.”

Opponents of the restrictions say the increased push to control online activities is aimed at curbing criticism of the Pakistani military. The powerful institution is facing intense backlash for its alleged meddling in politics since incarcerated former Prime Minister Imran Khan was pushed out of office in April 2022.

Denying political interference, the military repeatedly has referred to online criticism and smear campaigns as “digital terrorism.”

Speaking Friday at a security forum in Islamabad, Pakistan’s army chief, General Asim Munir, reiterated the call for greater regulation of online speech.

“Freedom of expression without rules and regulations is becoming a source of degradation of values in all societies,” Munir told the audience at the Margalla Dialogue.

Earlier this week the PTA announced a meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunication, the Pakistan Software Export Board and the Pakistan Software Houses Association to discuss a VPN registration framework.

The authority also announced a “streamlined” VPN registration process that it said allows “legitimate users to register their VPNs through a new online platform.”

This came after Pakistanis reported widespread disruption in VPN connectivity over the weekend.

A cybersecurity source confirmed to VOA the outage was part of a government-run experiment to block VPNs using the firewall that is being deployed and was tested for months.

Officials reject the notion the government is attempting to throttle the internet. However, experts say the nationwide internet regulation tool acquired from China increases the Pakistani state’s capability to monitor communications.

To register a VPN, the user must submit, among other details, a subscriber ID issued by the person’s internet service provider, national identity card number and the IP address, which is a unique number that identifies a device connected to the internet. Experts say such information can enable authorities to track online activities, limit privacy and increase a person’s vulnerability to data breaches.

In its letter Friday, the interior ministry asked the PTA to allow users to register VPNs until the end of the month.

Source: <https://www.voanews.com/amp/pakistani-religious-body-declares-using-vpn-is-against-islamic-law-/7865991.html>