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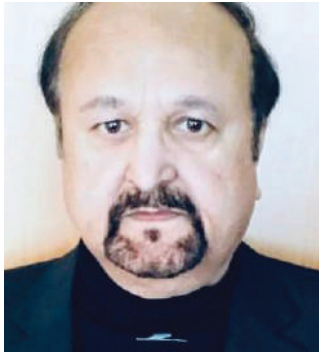


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EDITOR
Munazza Khan

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Amina Nuzhat
Attiya Wasee

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Syed Mubarak A. Shah
Ph. No. 0047-91698367

ADVERTISING MANAGER
M. Sultan Qureshi
Ph. No. +1(416)433-0112

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E-Mail: lahoreintlondon@gmail.com

Send your writeups at
m.abbasi.uk@gmail.com
Write to :
Monthly Lahore International
Phone: +44 794 007 7825

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Editorial



Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil

The non-Muslims being around 5% of the population with their efficient contribution in the making and prosperity of Pakistan. The Indian partition claim the communal reasons as the religious communities have their fair share in the contemporary socio-political dogma.

From Jogindar Nath Mandal to Rana Bhagwa Das, non-Muslims have served the Pakistan in their best and utmost uprightness, against all odds. Non-Muslims and tiny religious groups ever remained loyal to the state. Since 1947, not a single non-Muslim has ever found involved in any anti-state or terrorist activity. But since 1947, they are facing two worst discriminations, bifurcation of the nation through national flag and their recognition as second class citizen by using the word 'minorities'; not just Pakistanis.

The quota system and the reserved seats in the parliament of Pakistan validates a sense of limited prospects for non-Muslims. The constitution of Pakistan 1973 further officially discriminates as a non-Muslim citizen of Pakistan can never become the head of the state or head of the government in Pakistan despite having equal abilities with sensible potentials. The circumstances verify this is the deliberate genocide of the 1.65% Hindus, 1.5% Christians, 0.25% scheduled castes, and the rest of non-Muslims and other tiny communities in Pakistan.

Furthermore, in daily life non-Muslims are struggling for their basic needs and human

rights. The violation of the constitution's articles 9, 14, 17, 25, 26 and 27 by majority population and the government bodies is a common practise, which is swelling the miseries of the non-Muslims making the social survival more difficult. The curriculum is also biased. Anti-non-Muslims literature has been added to the curriculum. Particularly Ahmadis, Christians and Hindus are highly exploited where non-Muslims have no practical right to preach and propagate their teachings.

The misapplication of blasphemy laws drives a sever sense of insecurity and uncertainty. Particularly Ahmadis are facing a worst exploitation because they are easy target. With the half million population they are deprived of their basic rights. Since 1984, after the implementation of Anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance 765 Ahmadis have been booked for displaying Kalima, 47 for calling Azan, 484 posing as Muslim, 161 for using Islamic epithets, 93 for offering prayers, 856 for preaching and 275 killed.

Unfortunately, religious bifurcation and discrimination are the major reasons for the segregation in the social fabric making it destructive both for the national unity and solidarity. It is also damaging the international identity and reputation. Religious and political leaderships with the support of media and human rights activists need to educate people, because in fact these are not the problems of the non-Muslims or tiny communities but the problems of Pakistan.

Pakistan Badly Needs A Rudder



By: Prof. Pervez Hoodbhoy

WITH economic meltdown around the corner and the dollar over the roof, panic is all around. If successful, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail's IMF negotiations in Doha may push ahead the day of reckoning by some months. But then what? How long before the house of cards comes crashing down? Decades of overspending and underproduction cannot be undone in a day.

Each successive government has routinely blamed its predecessor for all that's gone wrong. Whichever party wins the next elections — if and when held — will surely continue this childish charade. In so passing the buck, Pakistan seeks to avoid recognising that it is the sick man of South Asia. This denial means it will resist seeking the right medicines. Today Pakistan lags behind Bangladesh and India in every indicator of consequence: economy, political stability, and human development. There are three powerful reasons for our present predicament. First is militarism. Since 1947, Pakistan has had a war economy. This enabled it to fight four wars, one of which was forced upon it but the other three were of choice. The luxury of choosing to go to war in 1965, and then again in 1999, was made possible by generous military and economic aid provided by the US. But now that Pakistan's ex-patron has turned niggardly, and our current taller-than-the-Himalayas patron appears unenthusiastic, a forever war with India over Kashmir is unaffordable. That India's occupation puts Kashmiris at the mercy of Indian security forces is tragic. This

has been the case now for decades. But India's wrongdoing became an excuse for creating a militarised Pakistani security state that, for selfish institutional reasons, has sought to keep Kashmir on the boil. Little good has resulted but plenty of harm was caused all around, including to Pakistan itself.

To avoid shipwreck, Pakistan will have to deal effectively with militarism, overpopulation, and its skill deficit.

Pakistan suffered self-inflicted wounds by harbouring militants who ultimately turned their guns on their benefactor. Nevertheless, there is a glimmer of hope. The 31-year sentence awarded to Lashkar-e-Taiba supremo Hafiz Saeed is a clear admission that the old policies will not work. High inside the military establishment it has been understood that cross-border jihad must be shelved. Fear of FATF contributed in no small way. More needs to be undone. Does it make sense to make a sick economy sicker by closing down the country for one full day on the fifth of every February? Or have all government employees and school students stand outside their buildings every Friday at noon and observe a five-minute silence (this flopped after the first attempt)? Or rename Kashmir Highway as Srinagar Highway in the vain hope that this will carry triumphant Pakistanis into the heart of Kashmir? Recipe: Pakistan must let embattled Kashmiris sort out their problems with India while staying strictly within the formal bounds of what we have pledged to do — provide Kashmiris political

and diplomatic support, and no more. If regional peace follows then one can be hopeful about civilian supremacy in Pakistan, moderation of defence expenses and, ultimately, some degree of self-sufficiency. Instead of more back-breaking Chinese loans, the way ahead lies through mutually beneficial Pakistan-India trade. If China and India are geopolitical rivals that can trade massively with each other, why cannot Pakistan and India do the same? Second is Pakistan's uncontrolled population growth.

Our cities are bursting at the seams, spilling far into the countryside, and gobbling up agricultural land. Pakistan's present rate of population increase is enough to create one more Israel every two years. In another 25 years there will be 400 million Pakistani NIC holders. In his new book *Charter of the Economy*, economist Hafiz Pasha has considered some impacts. Water availability has decreased by 49 per cent between 1990-1991 and 2020-2021; unemployment has risen from 1.7pc in 1961 to 3.1pc in 1981 to 5.8pc in 2018; availability of agricultural land has decreased from 6.1 acres in 1947 to 0.49 acres per capita of rural population; the quality of life in Karachi stands at 201 out of 231 cities in the world; etc. Nevertheless, believing that more is better, like old-time Catholics, many Muslim conservatives continue to oppose contraception. Every newborn, they say, comes with a guaranteed rizq (provision) stamped on its forehead. Let's assume this is correct and food was to drop miraculously from the skies for every Pakistani man, woman and child. Then what?

The law of exponential growth says that Pakistan will run out of physical space in a few decades, and water well before that. As for the amount of human waste generated and where it will go — one does not want to even think about it. And yet, setting aside this horrific future scene, Pakistan abolished the ministry for population planning many years ago.

Third is the rock-bottom quality of Pakistan's education system. As every employer will tell you, local degrees and certificates are worthless. Producing high-quality professionals requires much more than putting up buildings for universities, colleges and schools. Critical thinking skills make graduates useful and employable. These skills are entirely absent in the Matric, FA/FSc system and only partially developed in high-end O/A level elite private schools. Emphasis on rote memorisation and religious indoctrination has crippled minds and curtailed thinking ability. The proof stares us in the face. Pakistan has the world's tenth largest overseas workforce that earns the bulk of its foreign exchange. But only 1pc of migrant workers are classified as highly qualified (engineer, doctor, accountant, computer analyst, pharmacist) and 2pc highly skilled (nurse, teacher, manager). The remaining 97pc belong to different categories ranging from skilled (welder, painter, carpenter, etc) to low-skilled (agriculture workers and labourers).

Pakistanis are entirely absent from the world stage of high science and engineering. Prognosis: dangerous times lie ahead. It's bad enough to have a ship adrift in bad weather near a rocky shore. More ominously, its quarrelling crew members are trading blows rather than worrying about shipwreck. But the far greater problem is being rudderless. Pakistan's ultimate goals need fundamental redefinition. Until we recognise the urgent need to combat three deadly monsters — militarism, overpopulation, and skill deficit — any optimism for the longer term is unjustified.

The writer is an Islamabad-based physicist and author.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1690772>

SC Verdict On Article 63-A Is A Case Of Constitutional Rewriting

The Constitution does not forbid nor does any other law forbid defection or make it a crime. The Constitution merely provides remedial action for it.

By: Yasser Latif Hamdani

Much has been written about the Supreme Court's opinion in the Presidential Reference on Article 63-A of the Constitution of Pakistan and its political impact. For all practical purposes, Article 95 of the Constitution of Pakistan has become redundant because the only way a Prime Minister can be removed through a vote of no confidence henceforth is if his own parliamentary party decides to get rid of him. As things stand now, there is no room for an individual member of the treasury benches to vote the Prime Minister out of office. Without going into the merits of whether this is a good thing or a bad thing for our democracy – and arguably it will go some way in ensuring continuity in our democracy supposedly — it is the way that the Supreme Court decided the matter that should be a cause for concern for all constitutional jurists in Pakistan or at the very least make us wonder what is next vis a vis Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution going forward. It was a case of Constitutional re-writing by a majority of three to two. This is not to cast aspersions on the judges, but it was merely a clash between two very different approaches to the constitutional interpretation:

1. The living constitution theory
2. Textualist interpretation of the Constitution

The living constitution theory – which is what the majority of the judges emphasized during the hearings, says that the Constitution is a living document which adapts to times and changes in social and material conditions. This is a fascinatingly alluring idea, one which appeals to all those who are idealistic about the march of humanity. Indeed this

writer was once a proponent of the living constitution theory. However, we have seen the limits of that idea on occasion i.e. the linear march forward is not always the case. Indeed in our case, one could ostensibly argue that our march has been in the opposite direction. Even if that was not the case, the correct way of doing things is for the parliament to amend the Constitution where necessary while preserving the meaning as intended by the framers. This is necessary because we cannot have a shifting basis for constitutional interpretation because it will ultimately come down to an exercise in reading in provisions to the Constitution and re-writing it. This is precisely what happened in the said reference. The majority judgment went beyond the scope of Article 63-A and read it with Article 17- reading into the Article 17 supposed rights of political parties. Here are this writer's views on the merits. The vote is a matter of conscience and cannot be subject to the hegemony of the party head. The most that can happen is that the said member would be de-seated and would have to return to seek a fresh mandate from his or her constituents. The right to freely associate with another party does not extinguish when a member enters the parliament. It is not a reprehensible act. A person who acts on the voice of his conscience mindful of the possible consequences is akin to Socrates drinking poison hemlock. The Constitution does not forbid nor does any other law forbid defection or make it a crime. The Constitution merely provides remedial action for it. To suggest that it would be a morally reprehensible act attracting the provisions of Article 62(1)f is special pleading in

addition to being a wholly undemocratic reading of the constitutional provision. The US Constitution's Speech and Debate Clause is relevant here. It states "For any Speech or Debate in either House," Members of Congress (Members) "shall not be questioned in any other place. The US Courts have applied this clause to include within its ambit legislative acts. This is an old English law principle that finds some expression in our constitutional scheme as well. For example absolute parliamentary privilege attaches to the proceedings of the parliament. Arguably a vote in a no confidence motion is part of this proceeding. Therefore, while the Supreme Court can sit in appeal vis a vis de-seating, the act of defection itself cannot be penalized beyond the parameters of 63-A. 62(1)f cannot be stretched and applied to 63-A precisely because it is the prerogative of a member to defect by voting against his own government. This immunity of sorts can be said to be a key pillar of the separation of powers principle. The idea that a representative of the people is bound by party allegiance flies in the face of parliamentary practice in the UK where floor crossing is a matter of right and not a morally reprehensible act. Change of party allegiance is part of normal parliamentary practice in United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, three most well known parliamentary democracies. While Article 63-A of the Constitution provides for de-seating in the event of floor crossing or defection, it does not disqualify the member from re-election. The idea that an individual member's vote belongs to the party and the party alone is a novel creation, which finds acceptance only in a handful of South Asian countries. Bangladesh decisively went that way with Article 70 of the Bangladeshi constitution, which forecloses the prospect of vote of no confidence. This has led to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh being vested with dictatorial powers. Shaikh Hasina's oppression of opposition for example is well known. Vote of no confidence remains a pow-

erful check on abuse of power by the Prime Minister. Perverse reading of Article 63-A would oust this right of the legislators in our National Assembly. Nevertheless, it is stipulated that the Constitution makes it mandatory for a defector to seek fresh mandate after expressing no confidence through voting in such a motion. That the vote cannot be called tainted because the constitutional process under Article 63-A of the Constitution is triggered only after the vote itself is cast. Therefore, the vote does not become tainted and the question of it not being counted does not arise. Such a proposition would amount to putting the horse before the cart. Supreme Court's judgment in Imran Khan Niazi versus Ayesha Gulalai 2018 SCMR 1043 lays down the basis for disqualification and the necessary elements are: Clear instructions, in writing, by the party head and the actual act of voting against or abstaining from voting in accordance with the Party head's instructions and the act of voting or abstaining itself. In the 63-A case/reference Pakistani Supreme Court has in essence gone beyond the four corners of the text of 63-A – a self contained provision- and have ruled that "tainted" votes cannot be counted. More interesting of course is the larger question. Can an unelected institution preside over the rewriting of the constitution, thereby in essence taking over the responsibility of the elected legislature? There is unfortunately precedent from other countries that would suggest that similar approaches have been taken there, most notably in the United States of America and Republic of India. The US position tends to favor judicial pragmatism. Chief Justice Marshall noted in *McCulloch v. Maryland* 17 U.S. 316 (1819) that a constitution that attempted to detail every aspect of its own application "would partake of the prolixity of a legal code, and could scarcely be embraced by the human mind. . . . Its nature, therefore, requires that only its great outlines should be marked, its important objects designated, and the

minor ingredients which compose those objects be deduced from the nature of the objects themselves.” At another place, Chief Justice Marshall expressed the challenge which the Supreme Court faces in maintaining free government by noting: “We must never forget that it is a constitution we are expounding . . . intended to endure for ages to come, and consequently, to be adapted to the various crises of human affairs.” Indian Supreme Court read in the “basic structure” into the Constitution with its judgment in *Keshavanand Bharti v. State of Kerala* AIR 1973 SC 1461. This meant that the legislature’s right to amendment to the Constitution was severely curtailed. With respect, such exercise amounts to usurpation of legislative power by the Supreme Court. It is a very attractive idea i.e. the Supreme Court smoothening the jagged edges and filling in the gaps. It could mean things like reading in the right to Internet as part of right to life. Is that ludicrous? It has already happened in India. In *R. Rajagopal Vs. State of Tamil Nadu* 1994 SCC (6) 632 the Indian Supreme Court held that a citizen has a right to safeguard the privacy of his own, his family, marriage, procreation, motherhood, child bearing and education, amongst other matters. Whatever positive outcomes, it still leaves the whole idea of democracy in a precarious position. It is the people who should decide these matters through their chosen representatives and not Supreme Court judges. The only institution vested with the power to rewrite the Constitution is the Federal Legislature for better or for worse. The Supreme Court should not take it upon itself to protect the people from their own mistakes. Beyond defending the legitimate fundamental rights of the individual citizen, the Supreme Court should allow the people to choose the course that the country should take going forward.

<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/2022/05/20/sc-verdict-on-article-63-a-is-a-case-of-constitutional-rewriting/>

12 LHC Judges Get Loans For House Construction



LAHORE: The Punjab Finance Department has released some Rs358.5 million loan to 12 judges of the Lahore High Court for the construction of houses. The approval for the grant of loan was initially granted by the Standing Committee of the Cabinet on Finance and Development in its meeting on March 18. Since all the 12 judges will retire in the next three to eight years, the government will continue deducting loan installments from their salaries and later from pension. The finance department has released Rs29.875m each to Justice Shujaat Ali Khan, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Raja Shahid Mahmood, Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, Justice Syed Shahbaz Ali, Justice Shahid Jamil Khan, Justice Masud Abid Naqvi, Justice Muhammad Sajid, Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh, Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhry, Justice Anwaarul Haq Pannun and Justice Ms Alia Neelum. According to the order issued by the S&GAD’s Implementation and Coordination secretary, the loan has been sanctioned following approval of the Standing Committee of the Cabinet on Finance and Development as supplementary grant during the financial year 2021-22. The order says the loan will be governed in accordance with the terms and conditions of house building advance/ loans to be determined subsequently.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1687979>

Punjab's Teacher Challenge

By: Zeeba T Hashmi

Pursuit of education is impossible if there are no teachers available to make it a possibility for our deprived children. The supply-side barriers to education that we see in Punjab demands effective oversight by citizens. Recent data on teachers acquired by the CPDI – a citizen-led initiative headed by Mukhtar Ali – under the Punjab Transparency and Information Act, 2013 has revealed a disturbing fact: there are over 81,466 seats lying vacant against 433,134 sanctioned posts, amounting to an overall teacher shortfall by 19 percent in the province. A closer look into these numbers shows a far grimmer picture of teacher-supply disparities within districts. About 55 percent of the districts (20 out of 36 districts) have over 20 percent vacant seats, while for the rest of the districts, the vacant seats lie at 15 percent or above (with the exceptions of Jhang and Sialkot both of which have over at 13 percent of the vacant seats). Sialkot has the lowest share of 13 percent teacher shortfall whereas Jhelum, shockingly, has the highest at 39 percent (out of 4,034 seats, 1,591 are lying vacant). If the numbers mentioned in the stamped copies provided by the education officer in Jhelum are to be believed, then the district is embroiled with serious teacher shortfall issues. The information received reveals 1,098 sanctioned posts against which 1030 seats are empty. That makes a 94 percent teacher shortfall for primary level schools alone. Other indicators point towards an 80 percent subject specialist shortfall for 182 secondary and 12 higher secondary schools in the district. In Faisalabad, 52.3 percent of the sanctioned seats lying vacant for subject sspecialists for secondary



(533) and higher secondary schools (63) have. For the headmasters, 59.12 percent of seats are lying vacant. In Gujarat also, 71 percent of posts for headmasters/headmistresses are vacant. Serious shortages of subject specialists are also seen, with 84 percent of the sanctioned seats lying vacant for 317 secondary and 162 higher secondary schools in the district. Each district presents a story of the dire situation of teachers there. With no teachers available, how schools manage students is no major mystery here. Students drop out when they find no learning at schools. Economically burdened parents will no longer feel persuaded to keep their children at school if their time is not meaningfully spent there. A trend analysis of teacher recruitments as available in the School Education Census report 2020/21 shows a dismal performance in primary and elementary levels of school. The highest number of recruitments were observed between 2016 and 2018, with an increase by 29.5 percent in teacher recruitments for primary. However, the upward trend was not maintained, and a declining trend is strikingly noticeable with a drop of numbers by 11 percent between 2018 and

2020. The most worrying observation is the drop in elementary teacher strength by 19.4 percent in a single year in 2020. The highest number of recruitments were observed in 2017; however, between 2018 and 2020, the drop in the strength is estimated at 23 percent. The school education department's website shows that over 5,000 teachers are expected to retire from service in 2022 and another 6,300 teachers will retire in 2023. That makes about another 11,300 teachers vacating their seats very soon. Add to the list the 'erratic postings' of the teachers, which are 4,421 in total [this means they will be transferred to other districts as they leave behind a void in the schools they are currently posted at]. With almost nil new recruitments between 2018 and 2020, and the increasing trend in teacher shortfall, where are we really headed? There is much to lament about the poor education service delivery on the part of the provincial government. The reluctance of district education officials towards sharing education-related information seriously undermines the significance of RTI laws. The serious disparities observable within the districts call for more probes into the causes of low recruitments against the mammoth challenge of education deprivation for millions of children. The stalling of recruitment processes during a government's tenure and then filling the vacancies right before elections for political mileage have been a most damaging practice by our politicians, as it has caused serious losses to our students and schools. As has been observed in previous government tenures as well, was the PTI-led government in Punjab intending to do the same? The change in guard in Punjab will come with its own set of challenges and political point-scoring amidst a crisis. With the election for the new chief minister made controversial by the governor of Punjab, the delays and prolonging of the new cabinet as a result will add on to the provincial challenges. Perhaps with Hamza Shehbaz as CM-elect and Rana Mashud as the minister for education, replacing the PTI's Murad Raas, the two will not repeat old mistakes once they come into power. The current policies regarding teacher recruitment need to be reassessed for their feasibility. Teachers have long been complaining of not just the abysmally low basic pay, but also the non-revision of the rent and conveyance allowances. Teaching is no longer an appealing profession, as people have started looking for other industries that can promise them more protection and reasonable incomes. If such discouraging conditions for teachers remain unchanged, how can we expect the Punjab government to generate and attract new recruits at a time of an education crisis in Punjab? Those already in service are suffering because they don't really know how to make ends meet and survive the rising inflation. Eventually, nobody will be left to teach our students, who too will feel compelled to drop out. With over 19 percent of vacant seats in the province, one feels compelled to ask as to where the unutilized salaries against these posts have been directed to? This is an important question, keeping in mind the claim of 80-90 percent of the education budget in the province getting consumed by non-development expenditures (teacher salaries) of education – a claim that now needs more accountability efforts on the part of the Punjab government as there has been a persistent decrease in teacher strength since 2018. Furthermore, it remains to be seen how the new incoming education ministry – for whatever time frame – will be able to address the structural fault that lies at the heart of not matching up the new initiatives with teachers' existing capacities? What future is in store for education in the province? One shudders at the thought.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/957648-punjab-s-teacher-challenge>

Citation

His Excellency Sir Iftikhar Ahmad Ayaz, KBE

Sir Iftikhar Ayaz, KBE was presented Queen's Medal for Humanitarian Service and Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal at a special function in the Mayor's Parlour, Borough of Merton, on Thursday 19th May. The event was hosted by the Mayor of Merton Councillor Michael Brunt. The Deputy Mayor also attended the event. The Medals were presented by the Crown's Deputy Lieutenant Chris Cotton. The function started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Maulana Rana Mashhood Ahmad and it ended with prayer led by Ataul Mujeeb Rashed, Imam of the London Mosque. The Mayor congratulated Sir Iftikhar on this fabulous achievement. The Presenter DL Chris Cotton read out the Citation highlighting the achievements and services of Sir Iftikhar to the Small States and Humanity. The event ended with Refreshments offered by the Lord Mayor of Merton.

His Excellency Sir Iftikhar Ayaz, KBE, OBE, PhD, grew up in Tanzania and following his University education in the UK and USA worked in senior positions at the University of Darassalam, the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Africa, Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, UNDP and UNESCO. He has also served on the United Nations Human Rights Council Committee for the rights of minorities and continues to participate in meetings on freedom of religion and infringements of the Human Rights Charter. He is an Ambassador of Peace and Consultant for Human Development, Poverty alleviation and Conflict Resolution. He is also the incumbent Chairman of the International Human Rights Committee. He has been Tuvalu's Honorary Consul in the UK since 1996 and has been designated as Tuvalu's High commissioner to the Commonwealth and Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council. Sir Iftikhar Ayaz is a recipient



of several honours including Role Model of the year 2016, O.B.E. (Officer of the most Excellent Order of the British Empire) and K.B.E. (Knight Commander of the most Excellent Order of the British Empire). In 2020, he received the Queen's Medal for Humanitarian service and this year he has been awarded the Queen's Medal for Platinum Jubilee. He is an eminent member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and a former National President of the UK Chapter. He was the pioneer representative of the Community in Tuvalu. He is a prolific writer and speaker, having published several books and spoken at several high level forums including numerous Peace and Climate Change Conferences in several countries of the world. Sir Iftikhar has been commended for these

awards for his exceptional initiatives and services. These have benefitted Tuvalu and the Queen's realms considerably in their endeavours for development and global recognition. For almost 40 years Sir Iftikhar has served Small Island States to follow policies for the development of such education and infrastructure that would enhance the generation of economy and the quality of education and health services. As a field expert of the Commonwealth he introduced an innovative programme of Education For Life to provide skills based education to Island communities. It underlies his passionate philosophy; that the progress, development and enhancement of the quality of human life must be availed at any and every opportunity. That passion has manifested itself in his selfless services. As Tuvalu's Honorary Consul in the United Kingdom it has been Sir Iftikhar's determined view that Tuvalu's glorious heritage and the proud people of Tuvalu's contribution to the Commonwealth should be recognised internationally. In doing so, Sir Iftikhar has consistently acted beyond his role establishing important relationships for Tuvalu at international level. He has done so on an unpaid and voluntary basis at his own expense. Recently he was able to establish diplomatic relations between Tuvalu and St.Kitts Island. As a fellow of the Commonwealth in the year 2000, Sir Iftikhar approached the government of Tuvalu and submitted repeated, vociferous and ultimately convincing representations that an application for full membership of Her Majesty's Commonwealth be progressed. His involvement was instrumental in full Commonwealth membership being achieved. This led to full membership of United Nations and subsequently the opening of Tuvalu's permanent mission to the United Nations. This was a milestone achievement which led to Tuvalu being recognised as an important and valuable member of the international Community. These memberships have furthered Tuvalu's image and prestige in the World Community.



As a result, Tuvalu has been able to establish bilateral relationships with a number of countries throughout the world. Sir Iftikhar has been active and influential in establishing those relationships. For example, Sir Iftikhar has established strong links with the European Union, Netherlands, Turkey, UAE, Morocco, Malta, Italy and India. He is now actively persuading the government of Tuvalu to become a full member of the Commonwealth Foundation. Sir Iftikhar has also taken the initiative in speaking on important issues that affect Climate Change. Climate Change, is one of those areas in which Sir Iftikhar has enthusiastically and determinedly represented the States under threat. His personal initiative has resulted in him visiting and speaking at several Universities in Europe and in Institutions in the United Kingdom at which various Climate Change Organisations were present. This has made an overwhelming impact upon the World Community and prompted several countries to provide resources to cope with the challenges of rising Sea levels. He has also vociferously tried to promote cooperation and collaboration between the small Island States in the Caribbean and the South Pacific. As a result during the COP 26 last October an association was established between Tuvalu, Antigua and Barbados. Sir Iftikhar is now working to establish a Small States APPG in the UK. His Humanitarian services for the Welfare of the Refugees and the Realms of Her Majesty the Queen are adorable and he truly deserves the Medals he is going to receive today.

Death Toll During Pandemic Far Exceeds Totals Reported by Countries, W.H.O. Says

Nearly 15 million more people died during the first two years of the pandemic than would have been expected during normal times, the organization found. The previous count of virus deaths, from countries' reporting, was six million.

By: Benjamin Mueller and Stephanie Nolen

Nearly 15 million more people died during the pandemic than would have in normal times, the World Health Organization said on Thursday, a staggering measure of Covid's true toll that laid bare how vastly country after country has undercounted victims. In Mexico, the excess death toll during the first two years of the pandemic was twice as high as the government's official tally of Covid deaths, the W.H.O. found. In Egypt, excess deaths were roughly 12 times as great as the official Covid toll. In Pakistan, the figure was eight times as high. Those estimates, calculated by a global panel of experts assembled by the W.H.O., represent what many scientists see as the most reliable gauge of the total impact of the pandemic. Faced with large gaps in global death data, the expert team set out to calculate excess mortality: the difference between the number of people who died in 2020 and 2021 and the number who would have been expected to die during that time if the pandemic had not happened. Their calculations combined national data on reported deaths with new information from localities and household surveys, and with statistical models that aimed to account for deaths that were missed. Most of the excess deaths were victims of Covid itself, the experts said, but some died because the pandemic made it more difficult to get medical care for ailments such as heart attacks. The previous toll, based solely on death counts reported by countries, was six million. Much of the loss of life from the pandemic was concentrated in 2021, when more contagious variants tore through even countries that had fended off earlier outbreaks. Overall deaths that year were roughly 18 percent higher — an extra 10 million people —

than they would have been without the pandemic, the W.H.O.-assembled experts estimated. Developing nations bore the brunt of the devastation, with nearly eight million more people than expected dying in lower-middle-income nations during the pandemic. "It's absolutely staggering what has happened with this pandemic, including our inability to accurately monitor it," said Dr. Prabhat Jha, an epidemiologist at St. Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto, who was a member of the expert working group that made the calculations. "It shouldn't happen in the 21st century."

The figures had been ready since January, but their release was stalled by objections from India, which disputes the methodology for calculating how many of its citizens died. Nearly a third of the excess deaths globally — 4.7 million — took place in India, according to the W.H.O. estimates. The Indian government's own figure through the end of 2021 is 481,080 deaths. But India was far from the only country where deaths were substantially underreported. Where excess deaths far outstripped the number of reported Covid fatalities, experts said the gap could reflect countries' struggles to collect mortality data or their efforts to intentionally obscure the toll of the pandemic. In some countries, flaws in government reports were widely known. Russia, for example, had reported roughly 310,000 Covid deaths by the end of 2021, but the W.H.O. experts indicated that the excess death toll was nearly 1.1 million. That mirrored earlier estimates from a Russian national statistics agency that is fairly independent of the government. Aleksei Raksha, an independent demographer who quit the Russian

state statistics service after complaining of the failure to count Covid deaths properly, said that informal orders had been given to local authorities to ensure that in many cases, Covid was not registered as the primary cause of death. "Excess deaths have established the true picture," Mr. Raksha said. "Russia demonstrated a dismal performance in fighting the pandemic." In other nations, W.H.O. experts used what limited data was available to arrive at estimates jarringly at odds with previous counts, though they cautioned that some of those calculations remained highly uncertain. In Indonesia, for example, the experts leaned heavily on monthly death data from Jakarta, the capital, to estimate that the country had experienced over a million more deaths than normal. That figure would be seven times as high as the reported Covid death toll. Siti Nadia Tarmizi, a spokeswoman for the government's Covid-19 vaccination program, acknowledged that Indonesia had suffered more deaths than the government had reported. She said the problem stemmed in part from people not reporting relatives' deaths to avoid complying with government rules for Covid victims' funerals. But she said that the W.H.O. estimates were far too high. In Pakistan, Dr. Faisal Sultan, a former health minister, defended the government's death reports, saying that studies of the number of graveyard burials in major cities did not reveal large numbers of uncounted victims of the pandemic. For still other countries that suffered grievously during the pandemic, the W.H.O. estimates illuminated even more startling figures hiding inside already devastating death counts. In Peru, for instance, the expert estimate of 290,000 excess deaths by the end of 2021 was only 1.4 times as high as the reported Covid death toll. But the W.H.O. estimate of 437 excess deaths for every 100,000 Peruvians left the country with among the world's highest per capita tolls. "When a health care system isn't prepared to receive patients who are seriously ill with

pneumonia, when it can't provide the oxygen they need to live, or even provide beds for them to lay in so they can have some peace, you get what you've gotten," said Dr. Elmer Huerta, an oncologist and public health specialist who hosts a popular radio show in Peru. In the United States, the W.H.O. estimated that roughly 930,000 more people than expected had died by the end of 2021, compared with the 820,000 Covid deaths that had been officially recorded over the same period. In Mexico, the government has itself kept a tally of excess deaths during the pandemic that appears roughly in line with the W.H.O.'s. Those estimates — about double the country's reported Covid death toll — reflected what analysts there described as difficulties counting the dead. "We responded badly, we reacted slowly. But I think the most serious of all was to not communicate the urgency, the wanting to minimize, minimize," said Xavier Tello, a public health analyst based in Mexico City. "Because Mexico wasn't or isn't testing for Covid, a lot of people died and we don't know if they had Covid." The W.H.O.'s calculations include people who died directly from Covid, from medical conditions complicated by Covid, or because they had ailments other than Covid but could not get needed treatment because of the pandemic. The excess death estimates also take into account expected deaths that did not occur because of Covid restrictions, such as reductions in traffic accidents or isolation that prevented deaths from the flu and other infectious diseases. Calculating excess deaths is complex, the W.H.O. experts said. About half of countries globally do not regularly report the number of deaths from all causes. Others supply only partial data. In the W.H.O.'s African region, the experts said that they had data from only six of 47 countries. Scientists also noted that excess death rates were not necessarily indicative of a country's pandemic response: Older and younger populations will fare differently in a pandemic, regardless of the response. And

the W.H.O. experts said that they did not account for the effects of heat waves or conflicts. Where death figures were missing, the statisticians had to rely on modeling. In those cases, they made predictions based on country-specific information like containment measures, historical rates of disease, temperature and demographics to assemble national figures and, from there, regional and global estimates. W.H.O. officials used the release of their calculations to plead for greater investment in death reporting. "When we underestimate, we may underinvest," said Dr. Samira Asma, the W.H.O.'s assistant director general for data, analytics and delivery for impact. "And when we undercount, we may miss targeting the interventions where they are needed most." W.H.O. officials cited Britain as an example of a country that had accurately recorded Covid deaths: Their analysis found that about 149,000 more people than normal had died during the pandemic, nearly identical to the number of Covid deaths Britain reported. The disagreement over India's Covid deaths spilled into public this week when the Indian government on Tuesday abruptly released mortality data from 2020, reporting an 11 percent increase in registered deaths in 2020 compared with average annual deaths registered over the two prior years. Analysts saw the release as an attempt to force the W.H.O. to reconsider its calculations on the eve of publication. Indian health officials said their figures showed that the country had lost fewer people to Covid than outside estimates suggested. But scientists believe that most of the country's excess mortality occurred in 2021, during a grievous wave caused by the Delta variant. And even India's 2020 figures gave additional credence to the W.H.O. estimates, said Dr. Jha, who has also studied excess deaths in India. "The Indian government wanted to deflect the news," he said, "but they're confirming, at least for 2020, the W.H.O. numbers." Other experts said that India's refusal to cooperate with the W.H.O.

analysis was rooted in the country's history of ignoring how data can inform policymaking. "It's natural to miss some of the Covid deaths," said Dr. Bhramar Mukherjee, a professor of biostatistics at the University of Michigan School of Public Health who has been working with the W.H.O. to review the data. But, she added, "Nobody's been this resistant." The Ministry of Health in New Delhi did not respond to requests for comment. W.H.O. officials said that India's 2020 death figures were released too late to be incorporated into their calculations but that they would "carefully review" the data. Nations that report Covid deaths more accurately have also been at the center of disputes over the reliability of excess death estimates. In Germany, for example, the W.H.O. experts estimated that 195,000 more people than normal had died during the pandemic, a significantly higher toll than the 112,000 Covid deaths recorded there. But Giacomo De Nicola, a statistician at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, who has studied excess deaths in Germany, said that the country's rapidly aging population meant that the W.H.O. analysis might have underestimated the number of people who would have been expected to die in a normal year. That, in turn, could have produced overestimates of excess deaths. He said that the W.H.O.-assembled experts had accounted for trends in mortality, but not directly for changes in the age structure of the population. While Germany experienced excess deaths, he said, the W.H.O. estimate for the country "seems very high." Overall, the W.H.O. calculations were more conservative than separate analyses released earlier by The Economist and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. Some experts said that the W.H.O. analysis benefited from relying more heavily than other estimates on actual data, even where it was incomplete, as opposed to statistical modeling.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/health/covid-global-deaths.html>

Conservative MP arrested over rape and sexual assault allegations spanning seven-year period

The individual remains in custody and the investigation into the alleged offences, which took place between 2002 and 2009, is ongoing.



By: Sophie Morris

A Conservative MP has been arrested on suspicion of rape and sexual assault offences spanning a seven-year period.

Scotland Yard confirmed in a statement that a man aged in his 50s has been arrested on suspicion of indecent assault, sexual assault, rape, abuse of position of trust and misconduct in public office. The individual remains in custody and the investigation into the alleged offences, which took place between 2002 and 2009, is ongoing. The offences are alleged to have occurred in London. Tory chief whip Chris Heaton-Harris has asked the unnamed serving MP to stay away from parliament while the probe, led by specialist officers, continues. A spokesperson for the whips office said: "The chief whip has asked that the MP concerned does not attend the Parliamentary estate while an investigation is ongoing. "Until the conclusion of the investigation we will not be commenting further." It was understood the Conservatives will not make a decision on whether the suspect has the whip suspended until after the police investigation is concluded. The Metropolitan Police said it received a report relating to the alleged sexual

offences in January 2020. Neither the police nor the Conservative Party have named the MP involved. Last month, The Sunday Times reported that 56 MPs face allegations ranging from making sexually inappropriate comments to more serious wrongdoing. Boris Johnson agreed that sexual misconduct would be "grounds for dismissal" for ministers when asked about the newspaper's report at Prime Minister's Questions in April. The Prospect union, which represents hundreds of staff working in the Houses of Parliament, said firmer action is needed. Garry Graham, its deputy general secretary, said: "What will it take for parliament to finally take its responsibility to its staff and visitors seriously and suspend access to the estate for parliamentarians under investigation for sexual offences?" He added: "Parliament has the same responsibilities towards its staff as any other workplace and it must live up to them."

<https://news.sky.com/story/conservative-mp-arrested-over-rape-and-sexual-assault-allegations-spanning-seven-year-period-12615430>

The Senate overwhelmingly approves \$40 billion in aid to Ukraine, sending it to Biden.



WASHINGTON — The Senate overwhelmingly approved on Thursday a \$40 billion emergency military and humanitarian aid package for Ukraine, moving quickly and with little debate to deepen the United States' support for an increasingly costly and protracted fight against a brutal Russian invasion. The measure, paired with an initial emergency infusion of aid to Kyiv that was approved in March, amounts to the largest package of foreign aid passed by Congress in at least two decades, bringing to roughly \$54 billion the total American investment in the war in just over two months. The lopsided vote, with just 11 senators in opposition — all Republicans — reflected the remarkable bipartisan support on Capitol Hill for a massive investment in Ukraine's war effort, which propelled the bill through the House last week. And the speed with which it moved through Congress, where the leaders of both parties raised few questions about how much money was being spent or what it would be used for, was striking, given the gridlock that has prevented domestic initiatives large and small from winning approval in recent years. A bill to provide billions for pandemic-response efforts in the United States is stalled, for instance, and Republicans opposed another this week to provide \$28 million to address the nationwide shortage of baby formula. President Biden was expected to quickly sign the Ukraine aid package into law. His administration and Ukrainian leaders have pressed hard for its swift enactment, warning that they would run out of American aid by Thursday if Congress failed to act. "I applaud the Con-



gress for sending a clear bipartisan message to the world that the people of the United States stand together with the brave people of Ukraine as they defend their democracy and freedom," Mr. Biden said in a statement. Shortly after the vote, he announced that he would send another package of artillery, radars, and other equipment to Ukraine. The momentum behind the bill showed how the searing images of suffering in Ukraine, coupled with fears about Russian aggression spreading beyond the country's borders, had — at least for now — overcome resistance from both parties to American involvement in war abroad, even as isolationist voices off Capitol Hill have steadily grown louder in their skepticism. "We Americans — all of us, Democrat and Republican — cannot afford to stick our heads in the sand while Vladimir Putin continues his vicious belligerence against the Ukrainian people," said Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York, the majority leader. When the House passed the spending package last week, a flurry of lobbying against the bill, led by archconservative media figures and activists, helped drive 57 Republicans to oppose it. Determined to proj-

ect strong bipartisan support for Kyiv, Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the minority leader, worked for days leading up to the vote to tamp down on the anti-interventionist strain in his party, arguing both privately and publicly to his colleagues that the United States needed to aid a young democracy standing between Russian aggression and the Western world. The pinnacle of that effort came over the weekend, when Mr. McConnell traveled to Kyiv, Ukraine, Stockholm and Helsinki, Finland, in what he said was partly a bid to push back on former President Donald J. Trump's hostility toward NATO and the aid legislation itself. When Mr. Trump announced his opposition to the \$40 billion package, Mr. McConnell said, he worried that he "could lose a lot more than 11" Republican votes. The trip was designed "to convey to the Europeans that skepticism about NATO itself, expressed by the previous president, was not the view of Republicans in the Senate," Mr. McConnell said in an interview. "And I also was trying to minimize the vote against the package in my own party." "We have a sort of an isolationist wing," he continued. "And I think some of the Trump supporters have sort of linked up with the isolationists — a lot of talk out in the primaries about this sort of thing. I felt this would help diminish the number of votes against the package. I think that worked out well." Most of the Republicans regarded as presidential prospects in 2024 — Senators Ted Cruz of Texas, Tom Cotton of Arkansas, Tim Scott of South Carolina, and Marco Rubio of Florida — backed the legislation even in the face of opposition from right-wing organizations. In a 24-minute speech on the Senate floor, announcing his vote on Wednesday night, Mr. Cruz said he had carefully listened to a litany of arguments against the aid bill, including that it was too expensive and bloated with provisions unrelated to military aid, and that it was not in America's security interest to



counter Russia's campaign when there were so many domestic problems at home. But he had come to the conclusion, he said, that the assistance was worth supporting. "There's no doubt \$40 billion is a large number, and although much of that spending is important — in fact, some of it is acutely needed in the military conflict — I would have preferred a significantly smaller and more focused bill," Mr. Cruz said. "But our Ukrainian allies right now are winning significant victories with the weapons and training that we provided them already, and it is in our national interest for them to keep doing so." In the end, fewer than a dozen Republicans, including Senator Josh Hawley of Missouri, who is also regarded as a presidential contender, voted no. They cited concerns about sending billions of dollars abroad as the United States struggles with economic challenges of its own. "Spending \$40 billion on Ukraine aid — more than three times what all of Europe has spent combined — is not in America's interests," Mr. Hawley wrote on Twitter. "It neglects priorities at home (the border), allows Europe to freeload, short changes critical interests abroad and comes w/ no meaningful oversight." "That's not isolationism," he added. "That's nationalism. It's about prioritizing American security and American interests." Opponents of the legislation said they expected rising domestic

discontent with the size of the aid packages to grow as the conflict deepened. Avril D. Haines, the director of national intelligence, told senators earlier this week that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia is digging in for a long campaign and was counting on the United States' resolve to support Ukraine flagging. The dissenting votes in the House and Senate "set the table for what is going to be a very heated debate" in the fall, said Jessica Anderson, the executive director of Heritage Action, which lobbied against the bill. The legislation that passed on Thursday is substantially larger than the initial tranche of aid Mr. Biden had requested, a request that came only weeks after Congress had cleared a \$13.6 billion aid package for Ukraine, roughly equally divided between military and humanitarian aid. The bill had a similar split. It would allow Mr. Biden to authorize the speedy transfer of up to \$11 billion of American weapons, equipment and defense supplies to Ukraine, and allocate about \$9 billion to replenish that stockpile. Transfers thus far have included relatively expensive weapons like the 5,500 Javelin anti-tank guided missiles and 1,400 Stinger antiaircraft missiles given to Kyiv, as well as less-costly munitions like the 184,000 155-millimeter shells provided to Ukraine for a protracted artillery battle in Donbas. The package also includes \$8.8 billion for a dedicated fund intended to help Ukraine's government continue to function, and \$4.4 billion for international disaster assistance, part of an effort to stem the disruption to the global food chain as a result of the war. Another \$900 million would go to assistance for Ukrainian refugees, including providing trauma and support services, English-language training, and housing.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/19/us/politics/senate-passes-ukraine-aid.html>

When does the pain occur?

By: Esha Saima -Taxila Pakistan

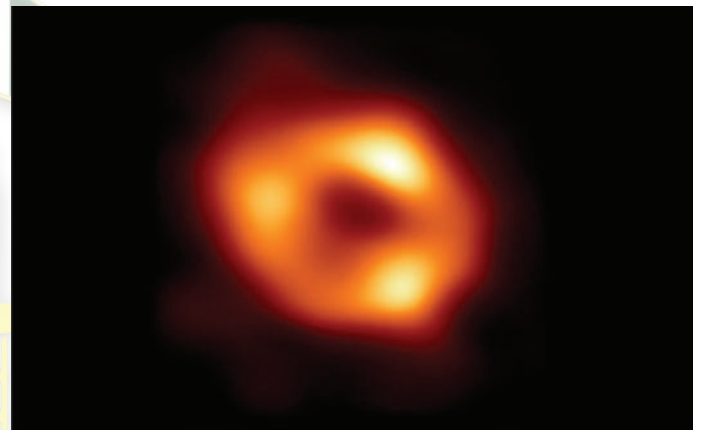
We are human beings and we often try to live a comfortable and happy life - but there are some pains that we cannot describe but we have no idea what the pain really is. We are overwhelmed by the temptation that comes from Allah, or we are overwhelmed by the pain of someone or his misbehavior. We need to know what the pain is and what How is it possible to cure? The problem is not that you can't do anything. It doesn't matter if you are physically in pain. It doesn't hurt when someone walks away and we don't feel anything. Trouble doesn't happen even when the affairs of the world go bad and you can't do anything, gradually everything gets out of your hands ... You know when the pain occurs and it is so severe that you can't even breathe. Trouble is when you don't feel God. Your heart may be pounding but your breath may stop. When you can't communicate with Allah even if you want to. The soul is anxious and tormented but we cannot feel Allah ... Trouble is when all the work in the world is going according to routine, the whole system is running but we do not have time to prostrate before Allah. Let us get tired of worldly affairs, let us be deprived of the power of prostration. Breathing stops then the real pain occurs then ... Trouble happens when we know that Allah is Able to do all things and we still forget to raise our hands in prayer. Let us spread our hands in front of the people of the world, but where 'Kun' is said, the power of prayers should also be taken away from us. Trouble is when we sink into the mire of sin and forget the way back. When we forget the one who is waiting for our return and despairing, lying in the mire of sins and leaving this world in the same way, this is the pain. May Allah save us from such troubles. Even if we go through such hardships, then these hardships become a source of nearness to Allah. Believe me we can live without everyone but we cannot live without Allah. Ask Allah and see. When we get it, nothing else in the world can give us coins. We can forget the world, not Allah because He is our origin and we must return to our origin.

The Milky Way's Black Hole Comes to Light

The Event Horizon Telescope has once again caught sight of the “unseeable.”

By: Dennis Overbye

Astronomers announced on Thursday that they had pierced the veil of darkness and dust at the center of our Milky Way galaxy to capture the first picture of “the gentle giant” dwelling there: a supermassive black hole, a trapdoor in space-time through which the equivalent of four million suns have been dispatched to eternity, leaving behind only their gravity and violently bent space-time. The image, released in six simultaneous news conferences in Washington and around the globe, showed a lumpy doughnut of radio emission framing empty space. Oohs and aahs broke out at the National Press Club in Washington when Feryal Özel of the University of Arizona displayed what she called “the first direct image of the gentle giant in the center of our galaxy.” She added: “It seems that black holes like doughnuts.” Dr. Özel is part of the Event Horizon Telescope project, a collaboration of more than 300 scientists from 13 institutions that operates an ever-growing global network of telescopes that compose one large telescope as big as Earth. The team’s results were published Thursday in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*. “I met this black hole 20 years ago and have loved it and tried to understand it since,” Dr. Özel said. “But until now, we didn’t have the direct picture.” In 2019, the same team captured an image of the black hole in the galaxy Messier 87, or M87. That image, the first ever taken of a black hole, is now enshrined in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. “We have seen what we thought was ‘unseeable,’” Sheperd Doeleman, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics,



said at the time. Astronomers said the new result would lead to a better understanding of gravity, galaxy evolution and how even placid-seeming clouds of stars like our own majestic pinwheel of stars, the Milky Way, can generate quasars, enormous geysers of energy that can be seen across the universe. The news also reaffirms a prescient 1971 paper by Martin Rees of Cambridge University and his colleague Donald Lynden-Bell, who died in 2018, suggesting that supermassive black holes were the energy source of quasars. In an email, Dr. Rees called the new result “a logistical achievement (and I liked the computer models).” Dr. Özel said that the similarity of the new picture to the one from 2019 demonstrated that the earlier image was not a coincidence. In an interview, Peter Galison, a physicist and historian at Harvard and a member of the collaboration, noted that the M87 black hole was 1,500 times as massive as the Milky Way’s; typically in physics or astronomy, when something increases by a factor of 10 or more, everything changes. “The similitude across such an immense scale is astonishing,” Dr. Galison said. At Thursday’s news event, Michael Johnson, a team member and also of

the Harvard-Smithsonian Center, said: "This is an extraordinary verification of Einstein's general theory of relativity."

Einstein's bad dream

Black holes were an unwelcome consequence of the general theory of relativity, which attributed gravity to the warping of space and time by matter and energy, much in the way that a mattress sags under a sleeper. Einstein's insight led to a new conception of the cosmos, in which space-time could quiver, bend, rip, expand, swirl and even disappear forever into the maw of a black hole, an entity with gravity so strong that not even light could escape it. Einstein disapproved of this idea, but the universe is now known to be speckled with black holes. Many are the remains of dead stars that collapsed inward on themselves and just kept going. But there appears to be a black hole at the center of nearly every galaxy, ours included, that can be millions or billions of times as massive as our sun. Astronomers still do not understand how these supermassive black holes have grown so big. Paradoxically, despite their ability to swallow light, black holes are the most luminous objects in the universe. Materials — gas, dust, shredded stars — that fall into a black hole are heated to millions of degrees in a dense maelstrom of electromagnetic fields. Some of that matter falls into the black hole, but part of it is squirted out by enormous pressures and magnetic fields. Such fireworks — quasars — can outshine galaxies by a thousandfold. Their discovery in the early 1960s led physicists and astronomers to take seriously the notion that black holes existed. What gave rise to such behemoths of nothingness is a mystery. Dense wrinkles in the primordial energies of the Big Bang? Monster runaway stars that collapsed and consumed their surroundings in the dawning years of the universe? Since 1974, the center of the Milky Way has been known to coincide with a faint source of radio noise called Sagittarius A* (pronounced Sag-

ittarius A-star). Astronomers including Andrea Ghez of the University of California, Los Angeles and Reinhard Genzel of the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics had calculated that whatever was there had the mass of 4.14 million suns and was confined within a sphere the size of Mercury's orbit around the sun. They reached that estimate by tracking the orbits of stars and gas clouds swirling about the center of the Milky Way and measuring their velocities at one-third the speed of light. For their achievement, Dr. Genzel and Dr. Ghez won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2020. What else could Sagittarius A* be but a black hole?

Chasing a shadow

Proving that it was a black hole was another job entirely. Seeing is believing. In 1967, the physicist James Bardeen proposed that a black hole would be visible to observers as a ghostly dark circle amid a haze of radio waves. A black hole's gravity will distort and magnify its image, resulting — in the case of Sagittarius A* — in a shadow about 50 million miles across, appearing about as big from Earth as an orange would on the moon, according to calculations performed in 2000 by Eric Agol of the University of Washington, Heino Falcke of the Max Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy in Germany and Fulvio Melia of the University of Arizona. Astronomers ever since have been trying to sharpen the acuity of their telescopes to resolve the shadow of that orange. But ionized electrons and protons in interstellar space scatter the radio waves into a blur that obscures details of the source. "It's like looking through shower glass," Dr. Doeleman said recently. To see deeper into the black hole shadow, researchers needed to be able to tune their radio telescopes to shorter wavelengths that could penetrate the haze. And they needed a bigger telescope. In 2009, Dr. Doeleman and his colleagues formed the Event Horizon Telescope, named after the point of no return around a

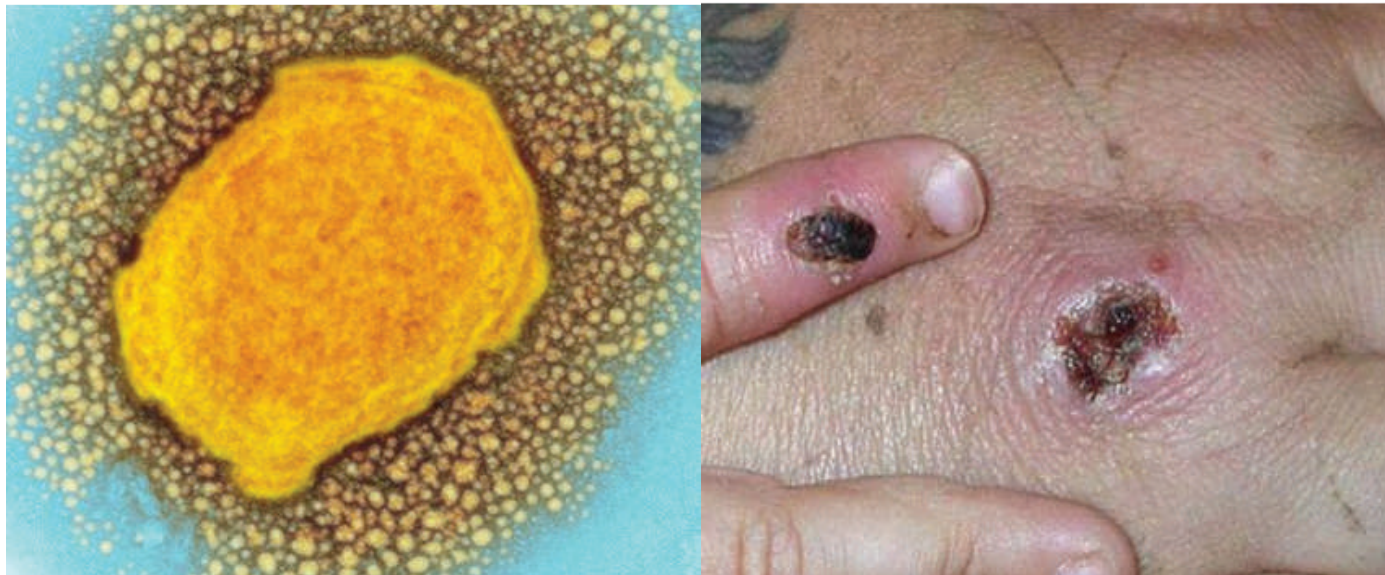
black hole. Today, the collaborative project employs 11 different radio telescopes around the world. The team scored its first triumph in April 2019, when it presented a picture of the M87 black hole. In 2021, team members refined their data to reveal magnetic fields swirling around the black hole like a finely grooved rifle barrel pumping matter and energy into the void. The data for Sagittarius A* were recorded during the same observing run in 2017 that produced the M87 image, but with more antennas — eight instead of seven — because the team was able to include a South Pole telescope that could not see M87. The Milky Way's black hole is a "gentle giant" compared to the one in M87, which sends quasars shooting across space. "If our black hole were a person," Dr. Johnson said of Sagittarius A*, "its diet would consist of one grain of rice every million years." It is ravenous and bright "but inefficient," he added. "It's only putting out a few hundred times as much energy as the sun, despite being four million times as massive. And the only reason we can study it at all is because it's in our own galaxy." Our black hole was more difficult to observe than the one in M87 for another reason: At less than one-thousandth the mass and size of the M87 hole, ours evolves more than a thousand times faster, changing its appearance as often as every five minutes. Dr. Özel described it as "bubbling and gurgling." In contrast, the M87 black hole barely budes during a weeklong observing run, "like the Buddha, just sitting there," Dr. Doeleman. "So over a night of observing, it's changing while you're collecting data. You're trying to take a picture of something with the lens cap off and you just get this blurry mess." On Thursday, Katherine Bouman, a team member and computer scientist at the California Institute of Technology, said that making a picture from the 3.5 petabytes of data from the observations was "like listening to a song being played on a piano that has a lot of missing

keys." Using a technique called Very Long Baseline Interferometry, the antennas in the network were paired off with each other one-by-one, like individuals shaking hands with everyone in a crowd. The more telescopes in the network, the more such handshakes can be performed and their results compared. Computer algorithms could then begin to fill in the missing data and simulate the possible structure of the black hole disk. Most of these simulations portrayed a ring about as big as the orbit of Mercury, consistent with the predictions from Einstein's equations and the observations by Dr. Genzel and Dr. Ghez. "Astoundingly, our findings corroborate predictions made more than 100 years ago," said Lia Medeiros, a team member and astrophysicist at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J. Not all is perfect, though. The computer simulations estimated that the black hole should be noisier and more turbulent. "Something is missing," said Priya Natarajan, a Yale University astronomer who studies black holes and galaxy formation. Dr. Doeleman's next goal is to expand the network to include more antennas and gain enough coverage to produce a movie of the Milky Way's black hole. The challenge for black-hole cinema will be to delineate the underlying structure of the black hole from the matter that is moving around in it. Kip Thorne, a Nobel Prize laureate and black hole expert at Caltech, said he was eagerly awaiting reliable movies of the gas flow around the black hole: "That is where major new insights and perhaps surprises may come." The results could be spectacular and informative, agreed Janna Levin, a gravitational theorist at Barnard College of Columbia University, who was not part of the project. "I'm not bored with pictures of black holes yet," she said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/12/science/black-hole-photo.html>

Monkeypox case confirmed in England

By George Bowden



A person in England has been diagnosed with the monkeypox virus, the UK Health Security Agency has said. The patient had recently travelled to Nigeria, where they are believed to have caught the virus before coming to the UK, the health agency said. They are now being treated at an expert infectious disease unit at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS trust in London. Monkeypox is a rare viral infection from which most people recover in a few weeks, according to the NHS.

The UKHSA said monkeypox does not spread easily between people and the risk to the wider public was very low. In an update published on Saturday, the health agency said: "As a precautionary measure, UKHSA experts are working closely with NHS colleagues and will be contacting people who might have been in close contact with the individual to provide information and health advice." The first-ever recorded occurrence of the virus in the UK was in 2018, and since then a handful of cases have been confirmed by health authorities.

Monkeypox: What are the symptoms and how do you catch it?

Initial symptoms of monkeypox include fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills and exhaustion, the UKHSA said. A rash can develop, often beginning on the face, then spreading to other parts of the body. The rash changes and goes through different stages before finally forming a scab, which later falls off. It can be spread when someone is in close contact with an infected person. The virus can enter the body through broken skin, the respiratory tract or through the eyes, nose or mouth. It can also be spread by contact with infected animals such as monkeys, rats and squirrels, or by virus-contaminated objects, such as bedding and clothing.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-61363896>
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Pope approved spending up to €1m to free nun from al-Qaida, trial hears

Unclear from Cardinal Angelo Becciu's testimony how much – if any – Vatican money went to kidnappers



the Vatican's sprawling financial fraud trial, which originated in the Holy See's €350m investment in a London property and expanded to cover other alleged crimes. Prosecutors have accused the defendants of a host of crimes in allegedly fleecing the Holy See of

Pope Francis authorised spending up to €1m (£850,000) to free a Colombian nun kidnapped by al-Qaida-linked militants in Mali, a cardinal has testified, revealing previously secret papal approval to hire a British security firm to find the nun and secure her freedom.

Cardinal Angelo Becciu's testimony could pose serious security implications for the Vatican and the Catholic church, since he provided evidence that the pope was apparently willing to pay ransom to Islamist militants.

Ransom payment are rarely if ever confirmed, to dissuade future kidnappings, and it is not known how much – if any – Vatican money ended up in the hands of the militants. Becciu, who was once one of Francis's top advisers as the No 2 in the Vatican secretariat of state, had withheld his testimony from the Vatican tribunal for nearly two years as a matter of state and pontifical secret. But he spoke freely on Thursday in his own defence after Francis released him from the confidentiality requirement. Becciu is one of 10 people accused in

millions of euros in fees, commissions and bad investments. Becciu, the lone cardinal on trial, is accused of embezzlement, abuse of office and witness tampering, all of which he denies. On Thursday his testimony covered the charges concerning his relationship with Cecilia Marogna, an Italian self-styled intelligence specialist who is also on trial on embezzlement charges. Vatican prosecutors accuse Marogna of embezzling €500,000, citing bank records from her Slovenian holding company that show wire transfers from the Vatican for unspecified humanitarian ends, and expenditures out of the account for high-end luxury goods. Becciu testified on Thursday that he hired Marogna as an external security consultant, impressed by her grasp of geopolitical affairs and the trust she enjoyed of two of Italy's top secret service officials, who accompanied her to a meeting in the Vatican. Becciu said he turned to Marogna for help after the February 2017 kidnapping of a Colombian nun, Sister Gloria

Cecilia Narváez, in Mali. She had been taken by al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, which has bankrolled its insurgency by kidnapping westerners. During her captivity, the group periodically showed Narváez on video asking for the Vatican's help. Becciu said he brought the matter to Francis as well as Marogna, who he said advised him that she could work with a British intelligence firm, The Inkerman Group, to secure the nun's release. He testified that Francis authorised him to proceed with the Inkerman operation, and forbade him from telling anyone else about it, including the Vatican's police chief. Francis was concerned about the security and reputational implications if the news leaked, Becciu said. Becciu said he and Marogna met Inkerman officials at their London office in mid-January 2018. Inkerman officials said there were no assurances of success and that the total expenditure could reach €1m, Becciu said. Because the Vatican wanted to remain external to any operation, Marogna became the key intermediary and the one to receive periodic payments from the Vatican secretariat of state for the operation, Becciu testified. Becciu said he told Francis about the London meeting in January 2018, while the pope was en route to Peru. "He listened to me and confirmed my intention to proceed," Becciu testified. At a subsequent meeting in Rome, Becciu said the fee could total "about €1m, part to pay for the creation of a network of contacts, and part for the effective liberation of the nun." Becciu testified: "I pointed out that we shouldn't have gone beyond that figure. He approved. I must say that every step of this operation was agreed with the Holy Father." Narváez was released in October 2021 after more than four years in captivity. Soon afterwards, she met Francis at the Vatican.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/05/pope-approved-spending-up-to-1m-to-free-kidnapped-nun-trial-hears>

BJP demands renaming of 'Jinnah Tower' in India



- BJP leaders taken into police custody after they march to Jinnah Tower.
- BJP demands tower be renamed after former President APJ Abdul Kalam.
- Narasimha Rao says "I wonder if we are in Andhra Pradesh or Pakistan".

Several BJP leaders and workers, including the national secretary of the party, Sunil Deodhar, demanded to change the name of Jinnah Tower Centre in Guntur, a city in India, after which they were taken into police custody, NDTV reported.

BJP demands that the tower be renamed after former Indian president APJ Abdul Kalam. The party workers decided to protest and march to Jinnah Tower but the police intervened and many were detained. Some Hindu organisations have been asking for the change of the tower's name for the past few months but they were not given any attention. They think that the building should be named A P J Abdul Kalam Tower. BJP Rajya Sabha member GVL Narasimha Rao condemned the police's action towards the party leaders. He said in a tweet: "I wonder if we are in Andhra Pradesh or Pakistan."

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/418914-bjp-demands-renaming-of-jinnah-tower-in-india>

Putin warns Russia will respond if NATO boosts Finland and Sweden's military strength

Speaking in Moscow at a summit of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), Vladimir Putin says NATO's expansion is a problem for Russia and that it must look closely at what he describes as the US-led military alliance's plans to increase its global influence. Vladimir Putin has said Russia has no issue with Finland and Sweden, but warned Moscow would react to the expansion of military infrastructure on their territories as both countries move closer to joining NATO. Speaking in Moscow at a summit of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), he said Russia must look closely at what he described as the US-led military alliance's plans to increase its global influence. Finland and Sweden have confirmed they will apply to join NATO despite warnings from Russia that it would be a "mistake" to do so. Finland shares an 810-mile (1,300km) land border with Russia and Sweden a maritime border. Both countries have for decades considered that joining NATO would represent an unnecessary provocation of Moscow. However, the historic shift in policy follows Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mr Putin said the enlargement of NATO was being used by the United States in an "aggressive" way to aggravate an already difficult global security situation. The Russian leader said there was no direct threat from NATO expansion which included those countries, "but the expansion of military infrastructure into this territory would certainly provoke our response". "What that (response) will be - we will see what threats are created for us," said Mr Putin, adding: "Problems are being created for no reason at

all. We shall react accordingly."

Other key developments

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has replaced his Territorial Defence Forces chief, without giving a reason
- The EU needs a few more days to reach an agreement on a new package of sanctions against Russia including a ban on Russian oil, says Germany
- Russian ally Belarus has announced the deployment of special operations forces along the Ukraine border, according to the UK Ministry of Defence
- McDonald's says it has started the process of selling its Russian business after more than 30 years
- The Kremlin has vented anger over reported attempts by the FBI and CIA to recruit Russian embassy staff in Washington

Call for Russia-led CSTO military alliance



to unite

Meanwhile, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko urged other members of CSTO to stand united, and accused the West of hoping to prolong the conflict in Ukraine to try to

weaken Russia as much as possible. Also addressing the summit in Moscow, he said "hellish sanctions" against his country and Russia could have been avoided if the group had spoken with one voice. "Without a united front, the collective West will build up pressure on the post-Soviet space," Mr Lukashenko said in televised opening remarks, addressing Mr Putin and the leaders of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Ukrainian forces 'reach Russian border'

It comes as Ukraine claimed that its troops defending Kharkiv have reached the border with Russia after pushing the invading forces back. It follows the release of a video by Ukraine's ministry of defence purporting to show Ukrainian troops arriving at the border dividing the two countries. It said the 227th Battalion of the 127th Brigade of Ukraine's Territorial Defence Forces had reached the border. However, it is unclear how many had reached the border and exactly where. The northeastern Ukrainian city is situated about 30 miles (50km) from the border with Russia and has endured weeks of heavy Russian bombardments.

<https://news.sky.com/story/putin-warns-russia-will-respond-if-nato-boosts-finland-and-swedens-military-strength-12614582>

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+447940077825



+447940077825



lahoreintlondon@gmail.com

Man fulfils dream of becoming a dog, pays 2 million yen



In another bizarre incident, a Japanese man fulfilled his dream of becoming a dog. And to look like a dog, he paid a large sum of money for a "life-sized" dog costume. The man commissioned a professional agency named Zeppet and asked it to make him a costume of a Collie — which is a dog breed, NDTV reported. The company took 40 days to make the costume and charged more than two million yen for it. Talking about why he chose to become a collie, the man said: "I made it a collie because it looks real when I put it on. My favorite is quadrupedal animals, especially cute ones. Among them, I thought that a big animal close to me would be good, considering that it would be a realistic model, so I decided to make it a dog. Long-haired dogs can mislead the human figure. I met such a condition and made Collie, my favorite breed of dog." Sharing the pictures on Twitter, the company said: "At the request of an individual, we made a dog modelling suit. Modelled after a collie dog, it reproduces the appearance of a real dog walking on four legs like a real dog."

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/418968-man-fulfils-dream-of-becoming-a-dog-pays-2-million-yen>

Election results 2022:

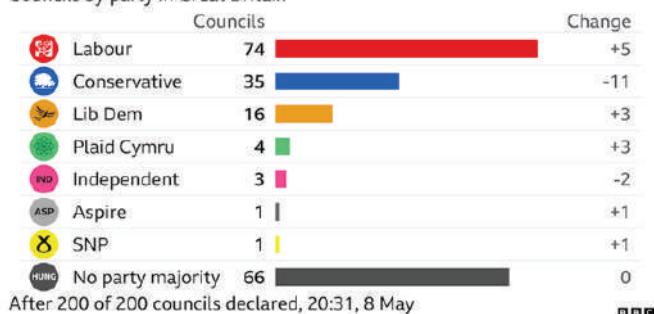
How the parties performed in maps and charts

Local Elections
2022



The results have been declared in all 200 councils up for election, with Labour gaining 11 and losing six, while the Liberal Democrats now control three more councils and have significantly increased their number of councillors across Britain. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has called the results "mixed" for his party, which lost 485 seats and 12 councils, although it gained one and won the mayoral race in Croydon. The Greens increased their number of councillors by more than 80, the third highest gain, though their overall number of seats remains low compared to the other main parties.

Councils scoreboard
Councils by party in Great Britain



In Northern Ireland, the nationalist party Sinn Féin took the most seats in the Stormont assembly for the first time.

Which councils changed hands across Britain?

Labour gained four councils from the Tories, including the former Conservative strongholds of Wandsworth and Westminster in London. The Lib Dems and Plaid Cymru are both up three. The Lib Dems took Hull from Labour - which held the council for more than a decade - and Gosport, which had been in Tory hands since 2010. The Scottish National Party gained one council, Dundee. The Aspire party won Tower Hamlets in London from Labour, where they also won the mayoral race.

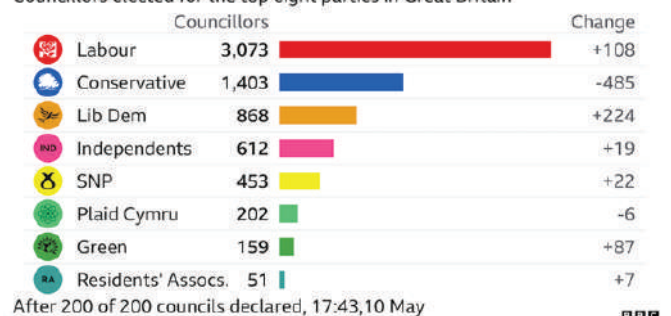
Sinn Féin the biggest party in Northern Ireland

Sinn Féin has topped the poll in Northern Ireland for the first time. The party saw a modest increase in its share of first preference votes, but the second placed Democratic Unionist Party's (DUP) vote share dropped by almost seven points. It was a good result for the cross-community Alliance party. It increased its first preferences votes by 4.5 points, to come third. And the Traditional Unionist Voice party also saw an increase in its vote share to just under 8%.

How did the parties perform in England, Scotland and Wales?

Councillors scoreboard

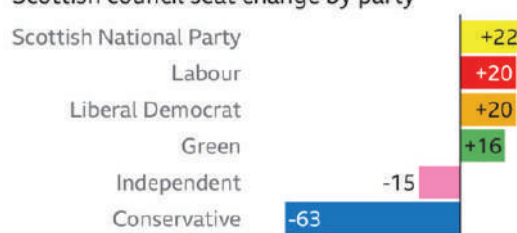
Councillors elected for the top eight parties in Great Britain



In those areas holding local council elections in England, Scotland and Wales, the Conservative Party lost the most seats. After the results had been counted Labour gained control of the most councils in England and won the most seats overall, but the Lib Dems gained more new councillors than Labour in England, as did the Greens.

Parties losing and gaining in Scotland

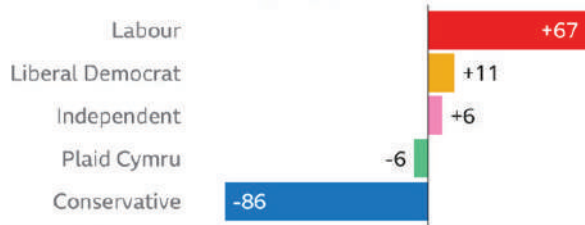
Scottish council seat change by party



In Scotland, the SNP continued to strengthen its position, gaining the most seats and gaining control of a new council. Labour also picked up a council and matched the Lib Dems in the number of seats gained.

Parties losing and gaining in Wales

Welsh council seat change by party



After 22 of 22 councils declared, 09:19, 7 May

BBC

In Wales, Labour had by far the strongest gains in council seats and took control of a new council, but Plaid Cymru, despite losing seats overall, gained control over three new councils.

Where did parties gain the most seats?

For the Conservatives, although they have lost more than 480 councillors, they have still managed to take council seats from other parties. The party's largest gains being eight councillors in Harrow and also in Enfield. Labour gained the second most council seats overall, seeing notably more councillors in Westminster and Cardiff. It also gained across the widest geographical spread, with new councillors in 86 authorities. The party gained Westminster from the Conservatives, who lost the council for the first time since its creation in the 1960s. The Lib Dems performed the strongest in increasing their number of seats across Great Britain, including 37 gains in the newly formed Somerset Council. Meanwhile, the Greens picked up council seats in more than 60 areas, more than doubling the party's councillors in this election.

Prince Harry to face tough time from 'angry' Prince William at the Platinum Jubilee



Prince Harry and Meghan Markle are warned ahead of their arrival in the UK, says expert. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, who are excited to attend the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, will face roadblocks on the way. Speaking to the Telegraph, royal commentator Camilla Tominey said: "I don't know what the Cambridges (Prince William and Kate Middleton) are thinking about them being at the Platinum Jubilee right now because we know that relations between both couples still remain quite distant. "Of course, Prince Charles, the only emotions that have ever been used by him and his people about how he's reacted to things like the Oprah interview are sadness rather than anger. "So, Dad is sad. I think his brother is angry and sad. "But as was the case with Prince Philip's funeral, brave faces will be put on proceedings." Prince Harry and Meghan Markle have thrown shade at the royal family time and again since they left UK in 2020. Speaking to Oprah in 2021, Meghan accused The Firm of being racist towards her and son Archie.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/960357-prince-harry-to-face-tough-time-from-an-gry-prince-william-at-the-platinum-jubilee>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-61344176.amp>

‘I’m A Good Catholic, I Swear!’: Madonna Asks Pope Francis To Meet And Discuss Her ‘Blasphemous’ Behaviour

Singer’s 1989 ‘Like a Prayer’ music video was banned by the Vatican

By: Ellie Harrison



Madonna has extended an olive branch to Pope Francis after she was condemned for her “blasphemous” behaviour. The singer is famous for her tensions with the Catholic Church. Her 1989 music video for the song “Like a Prayer” – featuring burning crosses and an erotic depiction of Jesus – was banned by the Vatican, with Italian Roman Catholic historian Roberto de Mattei saying at the time: “The video is a blasphemy and insult because it shows immorals inside a church.” Pope John Paul II also encouraged fans to boycott Madonna in Italy and not attend her Blond Ambition tour. Read more about the making of the video here. In a tweet on Thursday (5 May), Madonna tagged the head of the Catholic Church, writing: “Hello @Pontifex Francis – I’m a good Catholic. I Swear! I mean I don’t Swear! “Its [sic] been a few decades since my last confession. Would it be possible to meet up one day to discuss some

important matters?” She added: “I’ve been excommunicated three times. It doesn’t seem fair. Sincerely Madonna.” Madonna also came under fire for staging a mock crucifixion during a concert in Rome in 2006, leading to Cardinal Ersilio Tonino, speaking with the approval of Pope Benedict XVI, saying: “This time the limits have really been pushed too far. “This concert is a blasphemous challenge to the faith and a profanation of the cross. She should be excommunicated.” Next month, Madonna will release a new retrospective album to celebrate 50 number one hits on the Billboard Dance Club. The tracklist will include Madonna’s hit numbers like “Vogue”, “Like a Prayer”, “Music” and “Hung Up”.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/madonna-pope-francis-catholic-church-b2072159.html?amp>

Memorial Day is the time to betray our Israeliness

This day represents how militarism and apartheid are burned deep into our consciousness. Only when we are ready to betray it can we dream about peace. **By: Yuli Novak**

On May 3, 2022, hundreds of people attended the 17th annual Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony. The event — which is billed as an “opportunity for Israelis and Palestinians to both grieve together and stand strong in demanding an end to the cycle of violence” — took place in a secret location in Tel Aviv due to security concerns, and was broadcasted online with over 200,000 tuning in from around the world. The keynote speech of the night was delivered by left-wing Israeli activist and author Yuli Novak, the former executive director of Breaking the Silence. It was translated by Libby Lenkinski and is reprinted below in full. This day, Memorial Day, more than any other day, makes me feel like I belong in this place. It makes me feel Israeli. To be an Israeli is to grow up with the siren, and with the chills that accompany it. As a kid, you’re mostly trying to choke back an embarrassed giggle. But pretty quickly you learn, and then in the moment when it sounds, everything happens automatically: the body that straightens, the heart that assembles, the eyes that for just a moment close. And then the faces, the names, pictures that run through your head. Over time you already know exactly how to remember them all. But to be an Israeli is not just to remember this death — it is to honor it, to value it, to cherish it. The story of Yom Hazikaron (Israeli Memorial Day) is, in so many ways, the story of our Israeliness. And it’s also the basis and the justification for the political order that makes our lives on this piece of land possible. It is a story that is always the most personal, and always the most political. We were born with it, into it, it’s always with us. And with it also



the fear. And with that, the loneliness. Our Israeli story is a story of survival, of sacrifice, and of separation. It is a story of “us” and “them,” with clear dividing lines: we are always the villa in the jungle, and they are always the barbarians that are coming. And there are so many of them. And us — there are so few of us. The Israeli story is a story of a persecuted minority, always lonely in the world. Like some kind of predestination from ancient times. We are a people that will live alone. The Israeli story is a story of living in fear. To be an Israeli is to be afraid: of wars, of bombings, of terror attacks. To be afraid of Arabs that do terror attacks. To be afraid of Arabs. To be afraid of Arabic. To be afraid of Arabness. And the tragedy of the story is only getting deeper and more complex. Because our response to loneliness and fear is life by the sword: to arm more and more boys, to build more walls, to buy more planes. In the Israeli story strength is always military strength. And power is just sheer power. This day, Yom Hazikaron, is the day that best represents this Israeliness: the militaristic, the combatant, the male, the masculine. This day is so us, that any and every attempt to reimag-



ine it, to locate the memory in a different narrative, even the simple attempt, the innocent one, to mourn together — undermines Israeli identity and political order in Israel. And we, here, who are trying to offer a different experience of memorial, are labeled “traitors,” and rightly so. The willingness to betray the Israeli story of fear and loneliness is what makes this evening possible, for 17 years straight. On this day, because it is the hardest day to do so, the betrayal — in its deepest sense, its essential sense, and its transformative sense — gets loaded with a positive meaning. It is what allows us to sit here together, and to feel, alongside the pain, also a sense of pride. Because this isn’t a betrayal of ourselves, just the story we grew up into. Especially on this day, the day when the Israeli story is at its most potent — we must insist on releasing it. And this is really just the beginning. To truly escape the trap of this Israeliness, we must courageously choose to bear this betrayal beyond this day. The reality that demands repair spreads over time, space, and consciousness. It doesn’t only exist over the Green Line. And it didn’t begin in 1967. And it’s not only outside, but rather exists within us: in memories, language, dreams, in the limits of imagination. We cannot talk seriously about fixing this reality, before we are ready to acknowledge it and take responsibility for it. Especially on this day — facing incomprehensible death, that keeps you awake and leaves you speechless — we have

an opportunity to admit that even though we are all victims of the same reality, we the Israelis hold the power and make sure to keep this reality going. And despite the fact that in this bleeding reality we all lose big, there are those that lose way more than others. And especially, this is the day to admit that apartheid and separation are burned deep into our consciousness. They form who we are, and limit who we could be. To admit that despite our desire to feel the pain of Israeli and Palestinian deaths as if they were the same, we simply don’t know how. And it’s likely the case that in the next war, just like the one before, once the numbers of Palestinian children that we killed climbs, then like some kind of a cruel spell, the pain once again will fade by itself. And when someone asks to remind us that, even so, we’re talking about human beings — he will also be called a “traitor.” And here — another betrayal that one should be proud of. The betrayal of indifference that Israeliness imposes on us. Only when we are prepared to betray, to truly betray, this story — then will we be able to begin to dream anew about peace. But this will not be peace between rich men in suits shaking hands on the backs of men and women who live here. It will be a real and just peace, the kind that embodies a new reality. A corrected one. A reality in which we acknowledge the pain we caused and redistribute what we took by force. A reality in which everyone living on this land will have the right to a life full of opportunities, and free from oppression. On this day, the day when I feel more Israeli than ever, I wish for us that other days will come. Days when living here, in this place, as a Jew — will be very different from what it is now. That a day will come when the siren, and the chills that accompany it, will be just a distant memory, of something lonely and afraid, that we once were.

<https://www.972mag.com/memorial-day-israel-identity-novak/>

Israel's policy: Kill the messenger, attack the mourners

Unfortunately for Israel, however, Palestinian identity cannot be eradicated at the barrel of a gun.

By: Belen Fernandez

On Friday, May 13, The New York Times website ran the headline “Israeli Police Attack Funeral of Slain Palestinian Journalist”, which was then updated to “Israeli Police Attack Mourners at Palestinian Journalist’s Funeral”. The journalist in question, of course, was 51-year-old Shireen Abu Akleh, the veteran Al Jazeera reporter shot in the head and killed by Israeli forces on Wednesday in the occupied West Bank. As the Times reported, Israeli police officers had commenced “beating and kicking mourners” at the funeral procession in Jerusalem, thereby “forcing pallbearers to nearly drop the coffin”. This, at least, was mercifully straightforward information coming from the same news outlet that had just days before opted to use the noncommittal phrase “Dies at 51” in its announcement of Abu Akleh’s murder.

The US newspaper of record has also been known for such journalistic perversions as reducing the 2014 Israeli military slaughter of four Palestinian children playing football in the Gaza Strip to the following headline: “Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Centre of Mideast Strife”. One might well have expected a May 13 summary from the Times along the lines of: “Coffin Nearly Falls at Journalist’s Funeral, In Regrettable Embodiment of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”. Over the course of her dedicated career, Abu Akleh herself embodied Palestinian humanity by speaking truth to power. Now, the occupying power has spoken back by shooting her in the head and attacking her mourners – a response that can only be classified as acute and multi-tiered state savagery, in keeping with Israel’s modus operandi of refusing to let Palestinians



live, die, or be buried in peace. There is also the matter of not allowing dead and buried Palestinians to remain dead and buried in peace, which is what happens when, for example, the Israeli military undertakes to bomb cemeteries in Gaza – as though it were somehow possible to retroactively obliterate Palestinian existence by blowing up bones.

To be sure, Israeli attacks on funerals are nothing new – which no one should really find surprising given Israel’s track record of attacking ambulances, hospitals, medical personnel, schools, United Nations compounds, apartment buildings, animals, trees, babies, and pretty much anything else that can be attacked. Recall the July 29, 2021 assault by Israeli forces on the funeral of 12-year-old Mohammed al-Alami, who had been shot in the chest by Israeli soldiers the previous day as he travelled in a car with his father in the West Bank town of Beit Omar. Al-Alami’s funeral, in turn, led to another: that of 20-year-old Shawkat Awad from the same town, who was killed by Israeli fire while mourning al-Alami. In another case illustrating Israel’s apparent fetish for funeral attacks, Israeli security forces were unleashed against the March 2, 2022 funeral for 19-year-old Palestinian student Ammar Abu Afifa, killed

by an Israeli bullet in the Al-Aroub refugee camp north of Hebron. Even the Times of Israel, a fiercely Zionist outfit, felt compelled to run the headline: “Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian teen. The army hasn’t said what he did wrong”. Fast forward two months to Abu Akleh’s funeral, and the violent footage of baton-wielding Israeli police has earned a rare denunciation from outgoing White House press secretary Jen Psaki, who described the scenes as “deeply disturbing”. Not that the United States does not engage in deeply disturbing behaviour on a regular basis, including vis-à-vis funerals. Anyway, Israel and the US have long been two peas in a sadistic pod; Israeli malevolence simply has a more intense geographic focus. Incidentally, May 15 – a mere two days after Abu Akleh was buried in Jerusalem – marks the seventy-fourth anniversary of the Nakba, when Palestinians mourn the founding of the state of Israel on Palestinian land in 1948. This entailed the destruction of more than 500 Palestinian villages, the killing of more than 10,000 Palestinians, and the expulsion of at least three-quarters of a million more – the start of a bloody trajectory that continues to this day. Unfortunately for Israel, however, Palestinian identity cannot be eradicated at the barrel of a gun; nor will Palestinians spontaneously forget their existence now that Israeli security forces have arrested mourners for carrying the Palestinian flag at Abu Akleh’s funeral. And as Israel drives the final nails into the coffin of its own projected image of humanity, the truth is that any pretensions to Israeli humaneness should have been buried a long time ago.

The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera’s editorial stance.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/5/14/israels-policy-kill-the-messenger-at-tack-the-mourners>



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SARMAD KHAN | ACA, FCCA

OFFICE 115 LONDON ROAD, MORDEN, SURREY SM4 5HP - UK

CELL +44 (0)7903 416 966

TEL +44 (0)208 646 3666 FAX +44 (0)208 082 5002

EMAIL INFO@SARMADGLOBAL.COM WEB WWW.SARMADGLOBAL.COM

Indian court bans Muslim prayer gatherings at mosque after Hindu idols found



A court in north India ordered authorities Monday to limit large Muslim prayer gatherings in the historic Gyanvapi Mosque after a survey team found relics of the Hindu god Shiva and other Hindu symbols there, lawyers involved in the case announced. Earlier this month, the court in Varanasi set up a team to survey the premises after five women sought permission to perform Hindu rituals in one of its quarters saying that a Hindu temple once stood at the present Islamic site. Members of hardline Hindu groups claim that Islamic invaders and Muslim kings during their centuries of rule destroyed Hindu temples to build mosques or mausoleums on top of them as part of their expansionist strategy in the subcontinent. The Gyanvapi Mosque, located in the political constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is one of the three large mosques in northern Uttar Pradesh. Prominent groups believe it was built after demolishing a historic temple. Lawyer H. S. Jain, who represented the female petitioners, told the court that the survey team had found relics of Shiva and other Hindu symbols there. The judge banned Muslims from holding large

prayer gatherings inside the mosque. Police said the court order would help maintain law and order at a time when hardline Hindu groups tied to Modi's political party had amplified their demands to excavate inside some mosques and to permit searches at India's iconic Taj Mahal mausoleum. In 2019, the Supreme Court allowed Hindus to build a temple at the site of the 16th-century Babri Masjid that was demolished by Hindu mobs in 1992 who believed that it was built on the spot where Hindu Lord Ram was born. The incident led to religious riots that killed nearly 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, across India. Leaders of India's 200 million Muslims see the latest move as another attempt by hardline Hindus to undermine their rights to free worship and religious expression, with the tacit agreement of Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

<https://www.dailysabah.com/world/asia-pacific/indian-court-bans-muslim-prayer-gatherings-at-mosque-after-hindu-idols-found/amp>

Ukraine War Accelerating The New Space Race

While the war is enhancing great-power rivalries, smaller countries' space agencies – and companies – are stepping forward

By: John P Ruehl

Shortly after Russia was sanctioned for invading Ukraine in late February, its state-run space agency, Roscosmos, announced that it was officially suspending the US from an upcoming Venus exploration mission. Weeks later, on March 17, the European Space Agency (ESA) announced the suspension of a joint mission to Mars with Roscosmos, and further said that it would not be taking part in upcoming Roscosmos missions to the moon. These decisions have naturally generated concern across the space industry and political landscape. For decades, Russian and Western countries have collaborated in space despite flare-ups in tensions on Earth. In 1975, a US Apollo capsule linked up with a Soviet Soyuz spacecraft briefly as a symbol of cooperation amid the Cold War. In 1995, the US space shuttle Atlantis docked with the Russian space station Mir. And in 1998, the International Space Station (ISS) was launched, featuring a Russian Orbital Segment (ROS) and a United States Orbital Segment (USOS), the latter being operated by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the ESA, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). Sustained cooperation on the ISS has been a notable exception to the growing tensions between Russia and the Western states over the past decade. But in April, Dmitry Rogozin, head of Roscosmos, declared that Russia would end cooperation on the ISS, as well as other joint projects, if sanctions against Russia were not lifted. While such threats have been issued before, notably after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the heightened confrontation between Russia and the West since the start of the Ukrainian invasion has reinforced this possibility. NASA, meanwhile, chose to play down Rogozin's claims and stated that it would continue to operate the ISS until at least 2030. But Roscosmos has previously stated that it intends to develop its own space station by 2025, and has also revealed plans for a potential manned mission to the moon. Russia's GLONASS satellite navigation system, which achieved global coverage in 2011, has also become a viable rival to the United States' Global Positioning System (GPS). These developments show the Kremlin's growing commitment to pursuing its own interests in space without partnering with Western states. In comparison, Roscosmos has increased its collaboration with the China National Space Administration (CNSA), particularly after the first wave of Western sanctions in 2014. In 2021, China and Russia announced plans to build a lunar research station, a direct rival to NASA's Gateway project, which will be coordinated with the space agencies of Europe, Japan and Canada. China has already created its own Tiangong Space Station, which was launched in 2021. While it is far smaller than the ISS, China's space agency has six more launches planned this year to complete the installation. China also sent a rover to the far side of the moon in 2019, as well as to Mars in 2021, and has announced plans for its own manned moon mission this decade. While the space programs of some countries in the Global South, such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and Iran, are certainly less impressive, their development demonstrates the growing accessibility to



which began in 1999, was transferred to the US military in 2004, and is now being run by the US Air Force's Rapid Capabilities Office, has so far conducted four missions, while collaborative projects with the ESA have further underlined Western dominance in space. But a growing phenomenon in space is the role of private companies. They have

space, which has long been dominated by Russia, China and Western states. More than 70 countries now have space agencies, while 14 are capable of orbital launch. For these countries, success in space in recent years has often come from collaborating with existing space powers. In 2005, Iran's first satellite was built and launched in Russia, while in 2008, China, Iran and Thailand launched a joint research satellite on a Chinese rocket. Technology sharing, domestic innovation, and decreasing costs have also allowed more countries to compete in space. India made history in 2013 after it sent its own orbiter to Mars, notably on a smaller budget than the space movie Gravity, which came out the same year. The growing number of countries active in Earth's orbit and beyond have also revitalized fears of the possibility of the militarization of space. So far, only Russia, China, the US and India have successfully demonstrated anti-satellite weapons. Other countries, however, including Iran and Israel, are believed either to be developing or already in possession of similar capabilities. Of course, Western countries remain far ahead technologically of any other state or group of states. NASA's Artemis 1 mission, for example, aims to place humans on the moon again by 2025, while three NASA rovers are currently active on Mars. NASA's unmanned X-37B program,

been involved in many of NASA's and the ESA's high-profile projects, including Boeing's involvement in the X-37B project. Largely based in the US and the UK, these companies have helped reduce costs and have increased opportunities for government space agencies, and they will be essential for exploiting the vast resources on the moon, asteroids, and other celestial bodies. Though hundreds of space-related companies exist, a handful have stood out as pioneers of the modern space age. Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic, owned by entrepreneurs Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson respectively, both made history in 2021 after conducting their own manned space flights. Blue Origin, defense contractor Lockheed Martin, and other corporations have also signed contracts to create private space stations in the future. The most notable private company operating in space, however, is SpaceX, which is owned by entrepreneur Elon Musk. In recent years, the company has helped reduce the United States' dependency on Russian Soyuz rockets to bring astronauts and deliveries to the ISS after the termination of the NASA program as a consequence of the Ukraine war. SpaceX has launched more than 2,000 Starlink satellites into space, with plans to launch more than 12,000 by 2026. Most will form part of the Starlink project that aims to provide internet

access to populations around the world. Ukrainian Vice-Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov tweeted at Elon Musk in February to use the Starlink project to bring Internet to Ukraine after some services were disrupted by the Russian invasion. Within days, Starlink was active across the country, and in early May, Ukrainian officials stated that 150,000 Ukrainians were using the service daily. The use of Starlink satellites was no doubt seen in Moscow as a direct challenge to the Kremlin. While Russia is currently unlikely to attack the network, this has raised questions as to how future confrontations between private companies and countries in space might play out. The growing use of private military companies on Earth both by states and by the private sector could inspire similar moves to protect government and private assets in space. The growing profile of private space-related companies threatens to upend the rules of regulations regarding space, most of which were written decades ago. This includes the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which through Article VI established that countries have the legal authority to regulate space and not international bodies, with private companies not yet having started space exploration when the treaty was finalized. The Artemis Accords, a modern US-sponsored agreement to regulate space created in 2020, has so far only been signed by 16 countries. Nonetheless, the increasingly competitive space industry has already demonstrated that even smaller countries can play a large role in it. Overseeing the development of technologies and tempering the weaponization of space, by both countries and companies, should become a priority globally to help ensure that growing competition in space does not lead to avoidable and destructive consequences on Earth.

<https://asiatimes.com/2022/05/ukraine-war-accelerating-the-new-space-race/>

Fly me to the Moon: US, Japan aim for lunar landing

TOKYO: Japan and the United States said Monday they want to put the first Japanese astronaut on the Moon as the allies deepen cooperation on space projects. No non-American has ever touched down on the lunar surface, and Japan has previously said it hopes to achieve a Moon landing by the end of this decade. President Joe Biden, after his first face-to-face meeting with Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo, said the nations will work together in the US-led Artemis programme to send humans to the Moon, and later to Mars. Biden said he was "excited" about the collaboration, including on the Gateway facility, which will orbit the Moon and provide support for future missions. "I'm excited (about) the work we'll do together on the Gateway Station around the Moon, and look forward to the first Japanese astronaut joining us on the mission to the lunar surface under the Artemis programme," he said at a joint press conference. Japan's domestic space programme focuses on satellites and probes, so Japanese astronauts have turned to the US and Russia to travel to the International Space Station. But space agency JAXA is looking to revitalise its ranks, last year launching its first recruitment of new astronauts in 13 years. It lifted the requirement that applicants have a science degree and urged women to apply, because all seven of the nations current astronauts are men.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/960109-fly-me-to-the-moon-us-japan-aim-for-lunar-landing>



NATO Shouldn't Rubber-Stamp Finland's Bid to Join | Opinion

By: Daniel R. Depetris

Russian President Vladimir Putin has dug Russia into a massive geopolitical hole. The country he so desperately wants to develop as a 21st century superpower is now weaker today than it was before the invasion of Ukraine. His war of choice was supposed to be a relatively quick and painless affair, where Russian soldiers would easily strut into Kyiv, push Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky into exile and be thanked by a grateful Ukrainian population with cheers and flowers. It hasn't worked out that way. The invasion is nothing short of a hard, long slog for the Russian soldiers who are unfortunate enough to execute orders from incompetent officers. While Moscow may be making small territorial inroads in the east (according to Ukrainian security officials, Russian forces have taken about 80 percent of the Donbas), the gains are coming at a steep cost in Russian lives and equipment. Outside the battlefield, Putin's war is diminishing Russia's geopolitical position and threatening its economy with an 11 percent contraction. Nearly 4 million Russians have left Russia this year, including tens of thousands of high-skilled technology workers who no longer see a near-term future in their own country. Putin can now pat himself on the back for something else: convincing a Finnish political elite that was wedded to military non-alignment between NATO and Russia for plunging fully into the Western camp. This week, after weeks of intense deliberations, Finland's President Sauli Niinistö and Prime Minister Sanna Marin released a joint statement endorsing Helsinki's bid to join NATO. Finland's neighbor Sweden is likely to submit its own application to NATO as soon as next week. Finland's

application for NATO membership will likely be approved rapidly. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg all but confirmed that the alliance would essentially rubber-stamp Finland's (and Sweden's) accession without so much as a furrowed brow. "It's their decision," Stoltenberg told reporters last month. "But if they decide to apply, Finland and Sweden will be warmly welcomed, and I expect that process to go quickly." Washington immediately praised Helsinki's decision, with Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby calling it "historic." Western diplomats have indicated that Finland's acceptance into the alliance is a done deal, even if lawmakers in all of NATO's 30 member states need to approve it. NATO, however, would be making a mistake fast-tracking Finland's accession. This isn't because Finland has a mediocre military or fails to meet NATO standards. Given the Finnish military's recent history of training exercises with the alliance, it wouldn't take much work to fully integrate the Nordic nation into NATO structures. Bringing another member into NATO, however, is a weighty decision that comes with serious and solemn defense responsibilities for the rest of the alliance. This is particular true for the United States, which by virtue of its size, military heft and leadership role in NATO's own institutions—the alliance's top general has always been an American—has carried NATO on its back ever since the organization was established 73 years ago. Whether or not one supports expanding NATO into the Nordic region, the very least we can expect is an honest debate about the matter. The West has tended to view NATO enlargement as a net benefit for European security. But as my col-

league at Defense Priorities, Benjamin Friedman, pointed out, one must be mindful of the risks as well. Russia, for instance, won't take too kindly with NATO doubling the size of its joint border. The Kremlin has already telegraphed that it could respond to the decision with deployments of nuclear missiles in the Baltic region. The Baltic Sea could become a highly congested body of water with NATO and Russian vessels in more frequent contact. Moscow may not hold a veto over who gets to be a NATO member state, but it does have the power to retaliate at a time, place and mode of its own choosing. The more fundamental point, though, is that NATO's enlargement comes with inherent and unavoidable risk. Simply stated: the larger the alliance is, the more territory its member states will need to defend in the event of a security crisis. By granting Finland membership, the U.S. and the rest of the alliance are in effect saying they are willing to fight a war with Russia, even a potentially nuclear one, in order to defend Finnish territory. This wouldn't be as big of an issue if responsibilities within the alliance were spread out evenly among its members. But this has never been the case. Most of the burden lies on Washington's shoulders. It is the U.S. that is often called to duty and expected to lead the response, with token European military support. The crisis in Ukraine is no different; the U.S. troop presence in Europe has surged to 100,000 (a 20 percent increase since January), the highest since 2005. The U.K., which decided to station 8,000 personnel in Europe between April and June, is a distant second. France, one of the most capable militaries on the European continent, has deployed 500 troops to Romania and another 200 to Estonia since Russia's invasion, less than 4 percent of what the U.S. has contributed during the same time. If the U.S. chooses to support Finland's NATO accession, then it should insist that Europeans, not Americans, are the ones

deploying troops to Finnish territory and helping Helsinki defend the 830 mile-long Russian-Finnish border. Such a step would not only introduce a little more equitability into NATO operations, but would go a long way toward matching Europe's newfound rhetoric about defense with concrete action.

<https://www.newsweek.com/nato-should-nt-rubber-stamp-finlands-bid-join-opinion-1706511>

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Devons-nous craindre le vote musulman en France ?



By: Dr Idrissa KONE

Cette année 2022 est une année électorale en France en effet le 24 avril, les français ont voté le président de la république. Et ils s'apprêtent à renouveler les députés de l'Assemblée nationale les 12 et 19 juin 2022. Un fait marquant durant cette élection est que le vote des musulmans fut un sujet d'actualité et a été quelque fois pris en compte dans les débats politiques. Très peu évoqué voir quasi ignoré, les politiques cette année ont jeté un regard sur la sociologie confessionnelle des votants. Un candidat en l'occurrence Jean-Luc Mélenchon arrivé au 3ème tour de la présidentielle a raflé une bonne partie des votes des musulmans. Ce candidat il faut le reconnaître a toujours refusé de verser dans l'islamophobie ambiante de certains politiciens qui surfe sur la peur des français pour engrener des voix mais, il a une approche plus républicaine dans le traitement des musulmans à savoir le droit de pratiquer sans être sans cesse ostracisé. Il a été qualifié d'islamo-gauchiste, un terme sans doute péjoratif pour encore une fois de plus créer la peur des musulmans. Madame Le Pen qualifié pour la plupart d'islamophobe a quelque peu flanché sur la question de l'interdiction du voile dans l'espace public avant de se raviser. Le président élu en discussion avec une femme voilée l'interrogeait si elle la portait volontairement, ce qu'elle affirmait par l'affirmative et il en fut ravi. La question est de savoir devons-nous avoir peur du vote des musulmans. L'Islam est-il contre la démocratie ? Lorsqu'on étudie le Saint Coran, l'on se rend compte que dans les différentes formes de gouvernement, l'Islam a préconisé la démocratie et le choix des électeurs envers un candidat tel que préconisé par l'Islam devrait aboutir à des élus les meilleurs possi-



bles et pour une meilleure conduite du pays. Relatif au choix des élus, le Saint Coran enjoint ceci : En vérité, Allah vous commande de céder les charges à qui de droit, et quand vous jugez entre les hommes, de juger avec justice. Et assurément, ce à quoi Allah vous exhorte est excellent ; Allah Entend-Tout, Voit-Tout. (Chapitre 4, Al-Nissâ, verset 59) A la lumière de ce verset, le premier critère inéluctable et non négociable est le mérite du choix de l' élu. L'Islam ordonne il faut choisir le meilleur candidat qui sera à même d'accomplir la mission quelque soit le bord politique. Feu le 4ème Calife (que Dieu l'enveloppe de Sa miséricorde) de la communauté musulmane Ahmadiyya abordant la même analyse a écrit : « le concept de démocratie présenté par l'Islam repose sur deux principes fondamentaux :

1. Le processus d'élection doit être basé sur l'intégrité et l'honnêteté la plus totale. L'Islam enseigne que lorsqu'on remplit son devoir électoral, on doit le faire en ayant à l'esprit le fait que Dieu nous surveille et que nous devons répondre devant Lui de nos décisions. On doit voter pour ceux qui sont les plus capables de faire face à leurs responsabilités nationales, et ils doivent être dignes de confiance. Une règle implicite dit en outre



que le devoir de voter est obligatoire, à moins, bien sûr, que des circonstances particulières et extraordinaires ne le permettent pas.

1. Les gouvernements doivent fonctionner sur le principe de la justice absolue.

Le second principe fondamental veut que, lorsqu'on prend une décision, on le fasse en se basant sur un principe de justice absolue.

Que ce soit pour une question sociale, politique, économique ou religieuse, le principe de justice ne doit jamais être compromis. Après la formation du gouvernement, le vote à l'intérieur du parti doit toujours se faire en gardant la justice pour objectif premier. Aucun intérêt personnel, aucune considération politique ou autre ne doit influencer le processus de décision. Ainsi donc, toutes les décisions prises dans cet esprit sont obligatoirement et véritablement celles du peuple, par le peuple et pour le peuple. » (Problèmes des temps modernes : les solutions de l'Islam, pages 177-178) En commentant de façon spécifique, la portion suivante du verset coranique cité plus haut à savoir : « En vérité, Allah vous commande de céder les charges à qui de droit », Il écrit : « Cela signifie que lorsqu'on exerce sa volonté dans le choix des dirigeants, il faut placer sa confiance en ceux qui la méritent. Le droit qu'ont les peuples de choisir leurs dirigeants est incidemment mentionné. Mais l'importance est donnée à la façon dont on doit exercer ce droit. Les musulmans doivent comprendre que ce n'est pas uniquement une question de choix personnel qu'ils pourraient exercer comme bon leur semble. Bien au-delà, il s'agit en fait d'une question de responsabilité nationale. Lorsque

la confiance est en jeu, le choix devient très limité. On doit assumer ses responsabilités avec honnêteté, intégrité et altruisme. Les responsabilités doivent revenir à ceux à qui elles incombent réellement....Selon les règles établies de la démocratie, s'il le souhaite, l'électeur peut voter pour une marionnette, ou encore jeter son bulletin de vote dans une corbeille à papiers plutôt que dans une urne. Quoi qu'il fasse, il restera irréprochable, et ne pourra pas être accusé de violer l'un des principes de la démocratie. Selon la définition coranique, l'électeur n'est pas le maître absolu de son vote, mais il en est le dépositaire. En tant que tel, il se doit de remplir son devoir honnêtement et consciencieusement en votant pour celui à qui les responsabilités reviennent. Il doit être vigilant et conscient que Dieu l'observe et qu'il devra répondre de ses actions. Ainsi, selon le concept islamique, si le membre d'un parti politique considère qu'un candidat, nommé par son parti, n'est pas en mesure de remplir ses responsabilités, il devrait quitter ce parti plutôt que de voter pour quelqu'un qui ne mérite pas de telles responsabilités. La loyauté envers un parti ne doit pas interférer dans la décision. De même, il faut accomplir son devoir électoral en étant de bonne foi. Chaque électeur doit donc voter, à moins de circonstances vraiment exceptionnelles. Autrement, il n'aura pas accompli son devoir. S'abstenir ou ne pas voter du tout, comme cela se passe aux Etats Unis où près de la moitié de l'électorat ne se déplace même pas pour voter, est complètement rejeté dans la conception islamique de la démocratie. » (Problèmes des temps modernes : les solutions de l'Islam, pages 179-1780). En somme, si les électeurs français adoptent le principe du choix des élus tel que préconisé par l'Islam, la peur du vote des musulmans ne serait qu'un vieux souvenir mais surtout, les électeurs auront une grande confiance en leur élu car le choix le plus juste et le meilleur possible fut de rigueur.

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