

Book Reviews

Palestinian prisoners: A question of conscience. Edited By John Calhoun and Ranjan Solomon. Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 2015, Pp. 107, ISBN: 978-2-8254-1653-2.

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This resource book is published in conjunction with the World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel (WWPPI), an initiative of the Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum of the World Council of Churches. It is based on the topic of Palestinian prisoners and the theme explored in the last year, “Let my people go.” The choice of the theme clearly underscores the crisis that affects several thousand Palestinians and their families.

The editors of this brief volume have treated their material in seven thematic chapters: Palestinian political Prisoners: An overview; Administrative Detention in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; Ailing Prisoners in Israeli Occupation Jails; Families and Family visits; Palestinian Children Detained in the Israeli Military Court System; Conscientious Objectors; and, Organizations Working with Prisoners and Human Rights. In their entirety, the chapters of this book describe the plight of more than 5000 Palestinian Prisoners – the conditions of their arrest, detention, and care – that continues to draw international attention and condemnation. This brief volume provides a responsible, factual overview of their situation and prospects. The legal frameworks of their arrest in the occupied territories, Gaza, and Israel itself, along with prison conditions and healthcare of prisoners and the detention of children are all detailed, supplemented by the specific stories of individual prisoners and their families. Also included are lists of other resources and organizations engaged by the issue and working for change.

Of immense importance is the analysis of the arbitrary detention of Palestinians, especially the use of “administrative detention”, by Israeli occupation forces, that has had a devastating effect on Palestinian society. Israel’s

use of mass detention and imprisonment of Palestinians, recall the editors, is a policy that aims to suppress any resistance to Israel's continued occupation and also to delay the development of Palestinian social and political institutions. Nearly every family in Palestine has been directly or indirectly affected by Israel's policy of arbitrary and illegal detention. This is an issue that speaks to people's hearts in Palestine. It is revealing to know that over the last 47 years, since the Israeli occupation in 1967, an estimated 750,000 Palestinians have been detained under Israeli military orders in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT), which constitutes approximately 20 percent of the total Palestinian population in the OPT, and as much as 40 percent of the total male Palestinian population.

Palestinian prisoners are arrested on the basis of different legal systems, depending on their residence, whether in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip or Israel. Palestinians and Israelis living in the OPT live under separate and unequal legal regime, under which Palestinians are subjected to more severe detention and sentencing provisions than Jewish settlers and Israeli citizens, with little or no effective judicial oversight. As a result, the differences in law produce much higher sentences for Palestinians committing similar or lesser crimes than Israelis. On 21 January 2011, Israeli settler Nahum Kormon, who beat an 11-year-old Palestinian child, Helmi Shusha, to death, was sentenced to 6 months of community services. On the same day, Suad Ghazal, a 15-year-old Palestinian girl accused of attempting to stab an Israeli settler, was sentenced to 6.5 years in prison (p. 5).

In addition, Palestinian political prisoners, whether from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, or Israel, are defined as "security" prisoners by Israel. As a result they are subjected to harsher interrogation techniques and more severe detention conditions than their Israeli criminal counterparts. The forms of torture and ill treatment employed against Palestinian prisoners include beatings, tying prisoners in "stress positions", interrogation sessions that last up to 12 consecutive hours, depriving prisoners of sleep and other sensory deprivation, isolation and solitary confinement, and threats against the lives of their relatives. In a few cases detainees died while in custody as a result of torture. Confessions extracted through such practices are admissible in Israeli courts. Israel defends its practices as a legitimate way of combating terrorism faced by its citizens, but in reality these practices are in direct contravention of international law, including the United Nations Convention

against Torture (CAT), ratified by Israel on 3 October 1991. The prohibition is absolute and non-derogable, and allows for “no exceptional circumstances whatsoever”. Although the Israeli High Court of Justice banned the use of torture during interrogation in September 1999, the Court allowed what it called “moderate physical pressure” – widely deemed as torture – be used in situations where a detainee is considered a “ticking bomb.”

Israel also systematically discriminates between Jewish and Palestinian “security” prisoners by offering preferential treatment to the former. Ami Popper, a former Israeli army officer, was sentenced to seven life sentences for killing seven Palestinians in 1990; however, his sentence was commuted to 40 years in 1999. During his imprisonment, Popper, who is categorized as a “security” prisoner, has married and fathered three children (p. 15).

It is quite clear that Israel is using the mass detention and imprisonment of Palestinians as a policy. This policy has the dual objective of suppressing any resistance to Israel’s continued occupation and colonization, while at the same time preventing from any sort of normal Palestinian society from emerging. The core argument of the editors that recurs through their volume is that Israel’s arrest and detention of Palestinians in the OPT and within Israel proper is governed by a regime of laws and institutions almost completely separate from the one administering the arrest of Jewish Israelis. Because this system enables the large-scale arbitrary arrest of Palestinians while generally affording them lower protection and guarantees than Jewish Israelis, it shall be understood as a discriminating institutional tool of domination and oppression against them. This resource book provides readers with authoritative on-the-ground information and perspectives.

Reading Shakespeare from Islamic perspective. By Sadruddin Ahmed, Mohammad Kaosar Ahmed, Ali Azgor Talukdar, Kamiz Ahmed Alam and Muhammad Tafazzel Hossain. Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT), 2014, Pp. 144, ISBN: 978-984-8471-22-7.

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Reading Shakespeare from Islamic Perspective provides a new dimension to the study of Shakespeare. The book is organized in five chapters with an Introduction. The authors have chosen four grand and widely studied tragedies: *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* and drawn analogy between the works of Shakespeare and the ideology of Islam. Unlike the earlier studies of tragedies from Marxist, humanist, feminist and modernist point of views, this book deals with Shakespeare from an Islamic point of view.

The introduction, prepared by Mohammad Kaosar Ahmed, provides the reason behind making the reading of Shakespeare from an Islamic point of view. It emphasizes the necessity of the teacher who being blessed with Islamic knowledge can show the students what Islam says about this and why they should follow the dictates of Islam. Quoting Professor Ali Ashraf, Kaosar states that a practicing Muslim teacher of literature who is aware of human limitations, evil temptations and human greatness can save students from falling prey to a seductive material literature. It provides a practical guideline to deal with Shakespeare from an Islamic perspective.

The first chapter, by Sadruddin Ahmed, analyses *King Lear* and presents the events of the tragedy alongside Islamic values that enables the readers to understand the points where Shakespeare coheres with Islam. The analysis of the relationships among Goneril, Regdelia and Lear and Gloucester, Edmund and Edgar from the Islamic point of view helps readers understand how the relationships in family ought to be maintained. The comments on the illicit triangular affair among Goneril, Edmund and Regan helps to form a clear idea about immorality according to Shakespearean and Islamic concepts which will certainly mould people to detest immoral relationship. There is room for further improvement of this chapter. The relationship among Lear, the Fool and Kent needs to be analyzed to stress the importance of brotherhood. Likewise, the character called the Fool should be highlighted to portray the Islamic value of promoting justice and standing against injustice. Similarly, the lessons from Shakespeare concerning god-like quality in human nature, making the right judgment, choosing a right life partner, and not losing hope in the midst of misfortune etc., could be highlighted.

Chapter two written by Mohammad Kaosar Ahmed presents an effective guideline to Muslim teachers to deal with *Macbeth* to save Muslim learners from the blind mimicry and intellectual slavery of European culture. The simultaneous

presentation of the story of Macbeth and that of Yusuf (Joseph) is brilliant in showing the picture of a mighty one being trapped by his greedy soul and the portrayal of a mere slave being guided by the beauty of soul. Where literature guides one to hate the former, the Qur'an inspires one to admire the later. The discussion on presence of evil in human mind, divine punishment, respite for the wrong doers, soothsaying, despair, unfaithful to the trust, temptation, man's inclination towards evil, murder, lying and repentance to be forgiven is scholarly enough to have a broad idea on what Shakespeare and Islam believe about them. The author may make a wide discussion on the relationship between husband and wife while commenting on the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. This chapter definitely helps the admirers of Shakespeare to explore the spiritual aspects in his dramas and let them march towards the elevation of soul.

Ali Azgor Talukder, in the third chapter, introduces Islamic Literary Theory (ILT) based upon the spirit of justice. The writer, first, offers an important discussion on the spirit, themes, attitudes and tendencies of Islam. It helps the reader have a clear idea about Islam. Next, it offers an interrelationship between the fundamental concepts of Islam and the principles of Islamic literary theory. Finally, the chapter makes the readers understand how to deal with Islamic literary theory while analyzing a literary text and thus, to fulfill the objective of ILT. It would be advisable to refer to the Qur'an, the Hadith and to several Islamic scholars while analyzing the concepts of Islam and that of ILT. The analysis of the themes of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* should also be analysed from an Islamic point of view.

Amiz Ahmed Alam proposed the idea of Islamic Literary Criticism (ILC) in the fourth chapter with a view to judge literature of any culture under the light of Islamic ideology in order to help people reach at the supreme state of human soul called Mutma'innah where it achieves full rest and satisfaction. The author has evaluated Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the light of ILC. This chapter gives a quick summary of the existing literary theories and that of ILC which let the readers understand what makes ILC different from and superior over other theories. Like Talukder, he also sets the principles of ILC on the basis of the fundamental concepts of Islam. The search for the presence of a sense of sacrifice for others is to be included in the guideline. The tenets should be set in such a way that they will help a critic to identify if the text covers the fundamental aspects of Islam or ignore them

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with its widely known phrase "to be or not to be that is the question" is analyzed by Muhammad Tofazzel Hossain in the principles of ILC in the last chapter of this book. After a brief summary of the prevailing literary theories, this chapter presents a wide discussion on Islamic Literary Criticism which focuses on justice everywhere for a peaceful world. This chapter also helps the readers get information and idea about law and justice according to the Qur'an which makes them realize that Islam is very unyielding in the case of justice. The author provides a valuable explanation on the concept of good and evil in Islam. Hossain shows that evil is in *Hamlet*, and justice is violated in all spheres. The young prince takes the vow to avenge his father's murder and executes his plan and thus, contributes to establish justice. The discussion on the treatment of justice undoubtedly increases the reader's desire to have a complete study of *Hamlet* in the light of ILC.

All the chapters of *Reading Shakespeare from Islamic Perspective* actually act like pearls in a garland. They support one another to explain the demand behind analyzing Shakespeare in the light of Islamic perspective. They form a guideline for the admirers of Shakespeare especially, the Muslim teachers and the students and help them understand why they should not follow wholly King Lear and Prospero. This book will let the readers feel that though he is a non-Muslim, Shakespeare coheres with Islam while supporting good and demolishing evil. It is expected that this book from BIIT will be very well received at home and abroad.

Fundamentals of public administration. By Begum Rokshana Mili and Amir Mohammad Nasrullah. Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT), 2014, Pp. 326, ISBN: 978-984-8471-20-3.

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Fundamentals of Public Administration, written by Begum Rokshana Mili and Amir Mohammad Nasrullah, is a valuable addition to the existing literature on Public Administration. There are plenty of textbooks on Public Administration in USA, India and other countries but these are meant for their respective audiences,

not Bangladeshi students and academics. Barring few exceptions including the book by AMM Shawkat Ali, a retired secretary of the government of Bangladesh, there are not many books to cater for the students studying six universities where public administration is taught as a discipline. This book should help ameliorate the problem of the serious dearth of English textbook on Public Administration.

This book is an abridged version of fundamental concepts of Public Administration. It discusses most of the terms and concepts albeit briefly. The book has abundance of quotations from the works produced by scholars from America and Europe. No elaborate attempt has been made to make the concepts clear and easily understandable by teachers to teach the students. Furthermore, the authors explain the concepts without citing examples from Bangladesh Administration. As a result, the students will have the problems of understanding and grasping. However, the book may be useful for the young teachers who will begin teaching as their career in Public Administration. Going through this book, they will quickly learn the concepts and terminologies and will consult other books as exhaustively referred to by the authors.

The book consumes a total of 308 pages in addition to references and the bibliography. The book is split into nine chapters. The bibliography is very exhaustive. A select bibliography would have been more helpful for the interested readers.

Chapter one contains definitional aspect of administration, goal and philosophy of administration. Here the authors could have stated the goal and objectives of Bangladesh administration as reflected in the constitution of Bangladesh for quick understanding of the students. In the same chapter under the heading 'Importance of Public Administration as a Specialized Subject' a small portion of discussion would have been included on 'Teaching and Research of Public Administration' in Bangladesh. Under the heading 'Approaches to Public Administration' two vitally important approaches have been left out from discussion and these are statistical and psychological approaches. Both are very important approaches. The former approach is widely used in all sectors of administration while the second approach relates to concepts like motivation, and leadership. Attitudinal or behavioral studies derive from social psychology. The fourth chapter on 'Governance' is well written. But 'Good Governance' is not the fundamental concept of public administration. It was developed in the 1980s and 1990s though its essence is old. It is as old as Kautillah's *Arthashastra*, Platonic

justice, Aristotatollian constitutionalism and social contract theories. The main idea of governance to me is “3 Es” referred by the authors in the book. Good governance is over used by all scholars. It is applicable in case of all sectors of administration. The concept may be likened to the proverbial “Potato” which can be used in all types of dishes. Public Administration also involves two core values like ‘Policy Planning’ and ‘Policy Implementation’ and Personnel Administration, which has not been taken up for discussion in the book. In chapter six, ‘the Dynamics of Organization’, concepts like ‘authority and power’, ‘centralization and decentralization, and coordination, deserve a little longer discussion with examples from Bangladesh administration. Similarly the discussion on planning, in chapter nine is unusually short. A variety of things come under planning such as centralized planning, decentralized planning, socialistic planning, capitalist planning, top down planning, bottom up planning, macro-micro-meso planning etc. need to be discussed in an integrated manner.

The authors have tried to explain many terms from an Islamic perspective which, however, is not reflected in the title of the book. If the authors sincerely desired to explain the concepts in administration in Islamic terms, which apparently the authors desired, then the book should be re-titled as ‘Fundamentals of Public Administration: an Islamic Perspective.’ Mere adding Islamic administration with Public Administrative concept is not desirable because there is a fundamental difference between the two. Public Administration is developed by the Western scholars with secular values, whereas Islam combines spiritual and material values with sovereignty lying exclusively with almighty Allah (SWT). It is hoped that the authors in future would write a book with a title like Islamic Administration: Major Concerns.

On the whole I find the book interesting, well written in plain language. I am sure this book will create an impact upon the students, the teachers and readers of general interest. My comment about the book is that the authors are the best judge of deciding as to what extent it will help the students since they meet and converse with the students in and outside the classes. I congratulate the authors for undertaking pains and patience to produce such a valuable work.