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AMV Holds Multifaith Peace Picnic & Prayer Service on 9/11 Anniversary



By Abdus Sattar Ghazali

Palo Alto: American Muslim Voice (AMV) held a Multifaith Peace Picnic & Prayer Service on September 11 on the 20th anniversary of 9/11. The event, held at the Palo Alto City Hall, was sponsored by American Muslim Voice, Senator Dave Cortese of CA State Senate, and Multifaith Voices for Peace & Justice. It was co-sponsored by more than 30 civil advocacy and faith groups.



The event was held to spotlight the AMV theme: Replacing the culture of despair, division and violence with a culture of hope, inclusion and peace. Omar Naeem Raza was emcee of the program which included scintillating

speeches and moving songs. The proceedings began with a recitation from the holy Qur'an by Hafiz Hassaan Haq.

Addressing the audience next, Palo Alto CA Vice Mayor Pat Brut referred to the general response to the 9/11 tragic terrorist attacks and said: "We have a choice. We can succumb to the temptation and respond in time and reciprocal of intolerance or choose what we are doing today: holding together to build peace and honor our diversity and embracing all who hold in common. That is what we do when we bread together like tonight."

Cantor Jaime Shpall from the Congregation Beth Am, Los Altos Hills offered the Jewish prayer. Rev Dr Debra Murray from the First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto

offered the Christian prayer. Maryam Mostaghimi, Member of the Bahá'í Community of Palo Alto, offered the Bahai prayer.

Farha Andrabi, President of MVPA Musalla (Mosque), spoke about the impact of 9/11 on people at large and Muslims in particular.

Samina Sundas, founder of American Muslim Voice Foundation, suggested to observe a moment of silence to honor victims of the 9/11 tragedy. In her remarks Sundas reiterated her message of unity among all groups and to transform this tragic day into one of peace and community building. Let us sow the seeds of new friendships by getting to know each other a little bit better, she exhorted the audience.

Next, Machel Ahmed in her melodi-

ous voice presented "Imagine" written by John Lennon.

E'Jaaz Ali, former FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force US Army Signals Intelligence Veteran, shared his thoughts on the 9/11 tragic event. He lamented that thousands of precious lives were lost on 9/11 and also during the last 20 years of war.

Punhal Chaudry, a ten-year-old from Bullis Charter School, presented a brief speech about unity. She stressed that there could be no peace without unity. Noor Navaid spoke about an unlikely friendship between a 9/11 family member and a detainee at Guantánamo.

Kansen Chu, former Assembly Member AMV, P18



From left: Ibraheem Bahiss, Zahid Hussain, Anatol Lieven, Omar Samad, and Yun Sun

■ By Elaine Pasquini

The Future of Regional Engagement with Afghanistan and the Taliban

Washington, DC: Amid the fast-moving events unfolding in Afghanistan, the country's regional neighbors are cautiously observing the situation before formulating a relationship with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.



On September 7, panelists on a webinar hosted by the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft offered their thoughts on how countries in the region would navigate relations with the new government in Afghanistan.

"Recognition of a Taliban-led government, along with development aid or investment, is seen as the key levers on how to shape Taliban behavior in some way," said Ibraheem Bahiss, a consultant for the International Crisis Group. "Those are the pressures and last few remaining levers that many of these countries, including the US, have, and I do not think they will be willing to give up that leverage very easily."

Providing humanitarian aid, as long as the Taliban guarantees safe passage for humanitarian organizations, is all that the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, are willing to commit to at this point, he opined.

But recognition, Bahiss stated, would be linked to the Taliban upholding human and women's rights,

which has not yet happened. "I don't think any of the international countries are in a rush to recognize the Taliban's government," he said.

While preventing terrorism and instability is important to countries in the region, Bahiss pointed out that the Taliban is a "quasi-military movement" and has been at war for 27 years. "I think it has never been in a state of complete peace where it must focus on the mundane stuff of economic stability and service delivery," he said. "I think the Taliban would like nothing more than to have ongoing war in the country... because they are in their element in that kind of environment."

Noting that Afghanistan is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe, Pakistani journalist and author Zahid Hussain described the current dire situation of the Afghans.

According to reports, Hussain said, more than 250,000 people have been internally displaced in the last six months. In the past year, the percentage of Afghans living below the poverty line has increased from 60 percent to 70 percent.

"We have not seen a large flow of refugees at the moment who are fleeing from the conflict, but, given the economic situation, there is the fear there will be more refugees com-

ing, which is one of the main concerns of Pakistan," he stated.

Responding to a question from moderator Anatol Lieven of the Quincy Institute on the reaction of the Pakistani public to Afghanistan's new government, Hussain said that some Islamists in Pakistan feel the Taliban takeover is a "victory for jihad and that it will give a huge impetus to the Islamic movement in Pakistan...and could contribute to extremism in Pakistan."

As to Pakistan's relationship with Russia, Hussain commented that Pakistan is a member of the "troika-plus which was initiated by Russia," and that the two countries remain in regular contact with each other and probably at this point "there is some kind of regional consensus about how to deal with the Taliban government."

Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center, offered the Chinese perspective on the Taliban-run government of Afghanistan. "The Chinese are calling this the victory of the people's war and that the Taliban was able to win because it had enjoyed support from the grassroots level," she said. "We're seeing Chinese public opinion turning extremely positive about the Taliban, [saying] that the Taliban are

while the UAE wants to get involved on the humanitarian side.

"Iran is a continuing shift of narratives," Samad opined. "They were watching to see what happens and...they gave a bit of a nudge to the resistance in Panjshir." Stability and protecting the rights of the minority Shi'a Hazaris in Afghanistan – about 10 percent of the population – are of concern to Iran, as is keeping an economic footprint there. "I think that is one of the reasons it is keeping its options open with the Taliban," he added.

Answering a question on the future of Afghanistan's narcotics production and trade, Samad noted: "The Taliban have announced a ban on cultivation and trade of heroin, but...this is a livelihood issue and... there is a population that will starve and be bankrupt" if forced to stop the illegal drug trade.

Samad questioned whether the Taliban could turn their narcotics production into a legal one, considering the demand by the pharmaceutical industry for opioid drugs.

Lieven pointed out, however, "the keys are to have a sufficiently honest...state because otherwise the whole thing collapses in corruption and illicit trade. This would be a fundamental test of the Taliban government in the future."

(Elaine Pasquini is a freelance journalist. Her reports appear in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* and *Nuze.Ink.*)

AMV FROM P17 from the 25th District, in his brief speech stressed that hate can be countered through unity. Chu represents Asian Americans. He said 9/11 was an attack on all of us. In the aftermath of 9/11, Muslims were the target of hate crimes just as Chinese Americans presently are. Chu said we have to be united to fight hate crimes.

Zanaib Ali spoke about honoring the Peace Makers.

Mary Klein from Palo Alto Friends Meeting, in her speech, said that 9/11 gave a pretext to wage wars throughout the globe without authorization by the Congress. "For 20 years the state of endless wars has pushed the mindset of militarism here into the cities and towns in our homeland."

Naiel Chaudry, a 12-year-old from Bullis Charter School, sang "You will be found" from the Broadway Musical.

Beth Am's Children Choir rendered "One Day." Karen Bergen and Ilona Pollak from the Congregation Etz Chayim also presented a song. Elaine Moise from Congregation Kedem sang the Jewish prayer "Avinu Malkeinu."

A group from the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) presented a spiritual song: "Love, Peace, Righteousness and Truth."



Eric Sabelman from Multifith Voices for Peace & Justice delivered the closing remarks. The event ended with a candlelight vigil.

Prof Bhutta Awarded 2021 Roux Prize

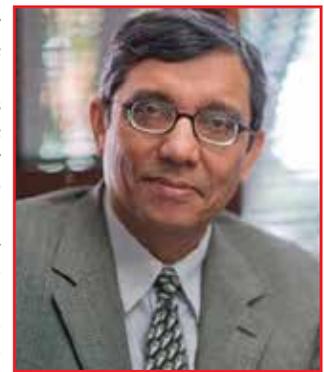
Prof Zulfikar Bhutta of the Aga Khan University (AKU) has been awarded the 2021 Roux Prize for turning evidence into health impact.

According to a press release issued on Wednesday, Prof Bhutta's work has made an integral contribution to global policy to improve maternal, foetal and newborn health.

He is the founding director of the Center of Excellence in Women and Child Health and the Institute for Global Health and Development at AKU, and co-director of the Sick-Kids Center for Global Child Health.

The Roux Prize is administered by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington and is funded by founding board member David Roux and his wife, Barbara. Launched in 2013, it is the world's largest award for evidence-based public health achievement and has drawn nominations from across the world.

"Professor Bhutta has had a tremendous impact on maternal



and child health, as a researcher and a leader," said Mr and Mrs Roux. "We are thrilled to honor his incredible work and commitment to reducing health inequities."

His work has focused on newborn and child survival and undernutrition, with a particular emphasis on reducing health disparities and reaching underserved populations, including healthcare in conflict settings and humanitarian emergencies.

He has played a crucial role in developing global consensus on interventions to address undernutrition in mothers and children, with publications that have informed World Health Organization (WHO) policy and global funding priorities.

"Dr Bhutta is a powerhouse of knowledge," said Dr Adil Haider, dean of the AKU medical college. "His contribution to the field of medicine and research as a whole is invaluable, with his exceptional work having phenomenal impact not just at the AKU, but across Pakistan and truly around the globe."