

What is the IIC?

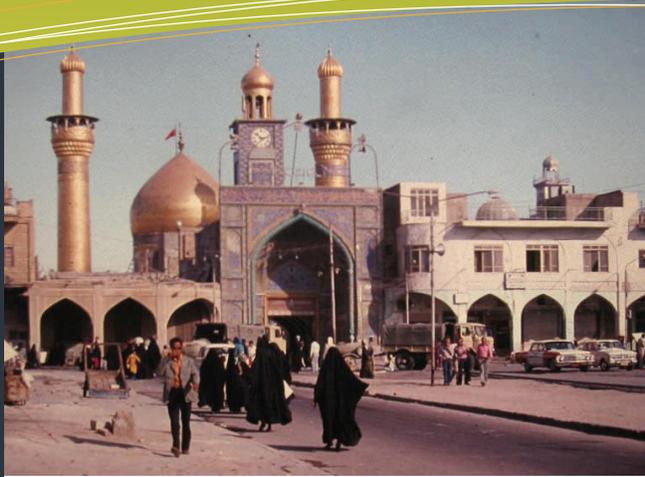
The Islamic Information Center is a "grass-roots" organization that has been formed for the purpose of informing the public, mainly through the media, about the real image of Islam and Muslims.

Who is running the IIC?

The IIC is run by our chairman, Imam Syed Naqvi, our committees, and supported by our volunteers. As of now, we have 50-75 people working in these active committees.

Inside:

Read quotes on what **Mahatma Gandhi, Charles-Dickens**, and others have to say about **Imam Husain**



Imam Husain

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Imam Husain: A Leader, A Guide, A Revolution

For the past several decades, the name "Husain" has been ever prevalent in the Western media. Various kings, presidents, politicians, and other leaders around the world have "Husain" (or some alternate spelling) as part of their name.

In the Muslim world, the 5 most common names are Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain (AS)*. Why are these names so important? Who were these people? On average, most people have heard of the name "Muhammad", but the other names remain generally unknown.

Understanding why these names are so important to Muslims is key in building interfaith friendships around the world. According to Gallup Poll estimates, there are approximately 1.3 billion Muslims around the world. With world population estimates at 6 billion people, statistics indicate that one in every five people is in fact a Muslim.

The history of who Husain was, what he did, and why he did it are

key components to Islamic history, and have lasting repercussions throughout the world, including modern day Iraq.

The story of Husain actually begins with the story of Abraham, an important Prophet of God, and "father" to the world's major Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

As is retold in various holy texts in all three religions, Abraham had two sons, both of them Prophets: Isaac and Ismail.

From Isaac, many Prophets descended from Abraham, including Moses, David, Solomon, and many others, finally leading up to Jesus, the last Hebrew Prophet. Ismail and his descendents settled throughout the Middle East, and from this lineage of Abraham, one final Prophet was born: Muhammad, son of Abdullah.

Then, Muhammad and his son-in-law Ali, his daughter Fatima, and his grandchildren Hasan and Husain changed the world forever.

* AS - "Alayhis Salaam" or "Peace be Upon Them"

Family Tree



The Ahlul Bayt

Muhammad
Fatima
Ali
Hasan
Husain

Prophet Muhammad and his immediate family members are referred to as the “Ahlul Bayt” and hold a special place in the hearts of all Muslims. Their role in Islamic history is remembered with great pride.



The mausoleum of Imam Husain in modern day Iraq

Karbala contains, besides the grave of Husain and his brother, the grave of all his 72 companions in Karbala. In particular, besides Imam Husain's grave are the graves of his two sons Ali Akbar and 6-month old infant Ali Asghar

Who is Muhammad? What is a “Prophet”?

Muhammad, though endeared and respected by Arabs for his wisdom and virtues, preferred solitude and kept his distance from the polytheist society.

Disgusted with the corruption throughout society, he used to retire to the Cave of Hira, in a mountain a few miles from his home town of Mecca, meditating God's Majesty and worshipping Him. Over time, Muhammad spent more and more time reflecting on the divinity of God, and it went to the point where he would spend an entire month in that cave, praying to God and contemplating guidance for the deviated people.

Finally the day dawned which would change

the fate of the world. When he had reached the age of 40 and was engrossed in his usual prayer to God at his retreat in the Cave of Hira, the Archangel Gabriel, appeared with the first verses of the Holy Qur'an and orders for the Holy Prophet Muhammad:

"Recite in the name of your Lord Who created. ... Recite and your Lord is most Generous..."

Holy Qur'an (96:1-5)

With these verses, Gabriel announced to Muhammad that Almighty God had decided that it was time to spread the message of Islam to the masses. In the coming years, Muhammad's Prophetic mission changed society dramatically.

A “Prophet” is what is used to describe a messenger of God. Prophets, throughout history have been sent by God, to represent His affairs on Earth. They include such figures as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Prophets are considered to be brothers to one another, and all members of the same true religion of God, passing on the same message throughout history. While the Prophets acted as messengers of God and leaders to humanity, the Prophethood ended with Prophet Muhammad. After him, however, God continued to leave just and pious leaders on the earth, each one called “Imam” (literally: “Leader”).

Alternative Spellings
Mohamad
Mohammad
Mohammed
Muhammad
Muhamad
Mohamed
Mohamet
Mehmet

Fatima
Fatimah
Fatema

Hasan
Hassan

Husain
Hussain
Husain
Husein
Hosein
Hussein
Hosain
Hosayn
Hossain

Why are there so many ways to spell the same name?

In the Arabic language, the spelling and pronunciation of these names is quite clear, however, when transliterated into the English alphabet, various differences arise based upon the conversion method used.

Researching the legacy of Imam Husain

History has shown us that the path of truth and justice has always been the most difficult to tread. Each religion has an event that stands out and speaks to humanity of the battle between right and wrong.

Judaism commemorates the torture of Hannah and her seven sons at the hands of the Greek king Antiochus when they refused to break Jewish laws. In Christianity we find the crucifixion of Jesus by the Roman king as another example of the triumph of truth over falsehood. Islam's example of selfless sacrifice in the face of tyranny and fallacy is that of the martyrdom of Imam Husain by Yazid.

Imam Husain was

the grandson of the Prophet of Islam, son of his beloved daughter Fatima and Ali. From the moment of his birth, Imam Husain was surrounded by role models that exuded the concepts of patience, courage, perseverance, and integrity.

To address and challenge all manners of corruption and oppression with bravery was the way of the Prophet and the way of the Prophet's family. After the death of the Prophet, Imam Husain witnessed the martyrdom of his mother, father, and brother respectively as they were slain protecting and preaching true Islam.

Yazid Ibn Muawiyah was the second Caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty. Along with his

father and grandfather, the family was known to be open enemies of the Prophet and his family. When he came to power he began changing the rules of Islam; making that which is unlawful to be lawful and vice versa.

Rightly so, true Muslims were outraged at his decrees, which were slowly corrupting the message of Islam.

However, anyone that spoke out against him was arrested and tortured. He realized he needed the support of the Prophet's family to legitimize his caliphate, and decided that Imam Husain should pay allegiance to him. He ordered his men to get this support, by any means necessary... even if it meant killing Husain.

For similar packets on Islamic historical figures, such as **Moses**, **Jesus**, and more check out www.IslamicInformationCenter.org

Who was Husain continued ...

When Imam Husain found out what Yazid wanted of him, he absolutely refused...

When Imam Husain found out what Yazid wanted of him, he absolutely refused. History quotes Husain as saying "A man like me can never submit to a man like him". At the same time, the citizens of an Iraqi city, Kufa found themselves in need of trustworthy leadership, and sent hundreds of letters to Husain begging him to lead their community.

Husain had a difficult decision to make. Yazid's intentions were well known, but Husain had no way to fight back. He decided to make the ultimate sacrifice, and despite the danger, set off for Kufa, stopping at a small strip of land called Karbala along the way.

Upon arrival in Karbala, Husain and his family were immediately besieged by approximately ten thousand of Yazid's soldiers. They were ordered to submit to Yazid's rulership or die. Over the coming days, Husain asked his followers to flee into the safety of the night, and escape the forces of the surrounding military.

He knew the military only wanted him, and that his friends and family need not suffer. He warned them, that once he was killed, they would be imprisoned and tortured. Despite these warnings, not a single person left the camp of Imam Husain, and a portion of Yazid's army defected to help Husain.

Imam Husain's camp was cut off from obtaining water and soon ran out of food. On the tenth day Imam Husain and 72 of his followers fought against thousands of Yazid's soldiers.

One by one, each man fell until only Imam Husain remained. The grandson of the Prophet too was finally killed, and in the most brutal and cruel way possible. The bodies of the innocents were beheaded and trampled with horses. Imam Husain's camp was burnt down and the women and children imprisoned. The heads of the inno-

cents along with the chained survivors were marched to Damascus to meet Yazid.

Following the massacre at Karbala, Muslims were horrified that Yazid had so mercilessly and blatantly killed the Prophet's family, and rebelled against him. Their eyes were opened to the importance of preserving Islam as the Prophet had

taught it and remaining confident in speaking the truth even under extreme torture as Imam Husain had experienced.

The martyrdom of Imam Husain is remembered today because it conveys the spirit of struggle and protest against injustice, untruth, and corruption. It is an example that can be applied in any context and in any time period. The idea that one must fight for one's beliefs and values regardless of the obsta-

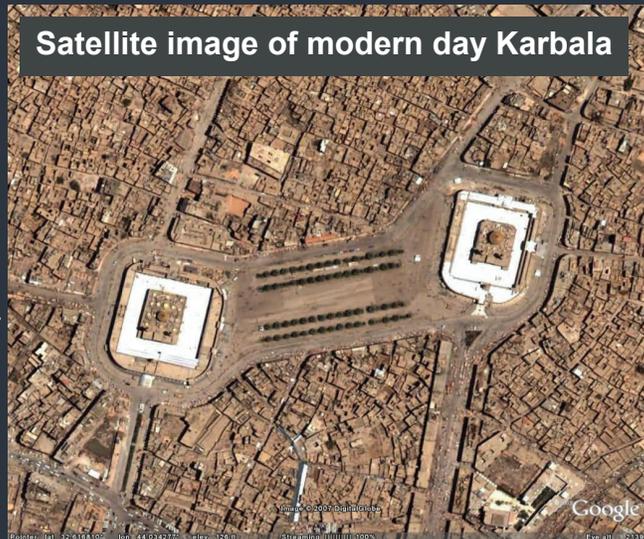
cles is the message of Karbala. Imam Husain sacrificed his life, and that of his sons, nephews, and friends.

The womenfolk of Imam Husain's camp remained loyal to the cause of truth even as they were made to constantly suffer in doing so.

Karbala has taught us that every land will have a Yazid, and so every land should have a Husain that is willing to rise up against the dissolution of truth and lead.

It is a missive to all people regardless of religion to find a cause that we believe in and fight for it through our words, our actions and our deeds even when others are unwilling and fearful to take up the mantle.

The Danish philosopher Kierkegaard said "*The tyrant dies and his rule ends, the martyr dies and his rule begins.*" and so is the case with Imam Husain. Though he was martyred over 1300 years ago, his noble death has inspired seekers of peace and justice to struggle on the path of truth, for he proved that the voice of one honest person will always ring clear in the end.



If Husain fought to quench his worldly desires, then I do not understand why his sisters, wives and children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore that he sacrificed purely for Islam

Charles Dickens



Imam Husain b. 'Ali – The Model for Human kind; Researching the legacy of Husain

History bears testimony to the fact that thirty years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in 632 C.E., the Umayyad dynasty came to power. They ruled the Islamic empire with brutal force and tyranny, bearing little or no concern for the Islamic principles that the Prophet had striven so hard to establish. Mu'awiya b. Abu Sufyan, who founded the Umayyad dynasty and proclaimed himself the sole ruler of the Muslims, appointed his son Yazid to succeed him.

After coming to power in 680 C.E., Yazid sought to legitimize his position as the leader of the Muslims by seeking support and allegiance from the Muslims. By seeking

recognition as the undisputed ruler of the Muslims, Yazid not only tried to consolidate his own position but also tried to strengthen his tribe's vicious stronghold over the Islamic empire.

However, a leader in Islam is required to be a source of emulation for his citizens and an exemplar *par excellence*. His duties include not only that of ensuring that Islamic law (*shari'a*) is implemented, but he is also required to exercise temporal and spiritual authority. In order to guide the Muslims, the leader must therefore possess the most exemplary moral traits.

Yazid, on the contrary, openly flouted Islamic laws. He was more concerned with hedonism, drinking

wine, and womanizing than with promoting society. He publicly ridiculed the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and sought to forcibly impose his tyrannical rule by threatening to kill those who opposed him.

It is within this context that we must examine the actions of Imam Husain (AS). As the grandson of the Prophet, he felt it his duty to safeguard the divine principles which had been revealed to his grandfather. That Imam Husain saw himself as an upholder and defender of Islamic principles can be seen in a letter that he wrote to the people of Basra. The Imam states that he chose to stand up for the rights of the Muslims because "the traditions of the

Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, and the first ten days of Muharram are marked by Muslims around the world in remembrance of Imam Husain's sacrifice that took place in the first ten days of Muharram centuries ago. The tenth day is referred to as

"Ashura" and is especially tragic, as this is the day that Husain, his children, and his companions were killed.

Muslims around the world, in each of the 52 Muslim countries, and more than 130 other countries around the world remember Husain every year in Muharram, keeping in mind an important proverb:

*Every day is Ashura,
Every land is Karbala*

The meaning of this proverb is that it is important to remember the message and sacrifice of Husain in every aspect of life, and to use it as an inspiration.

Imam Syed Naqvi

Chairman - Islamic
Information Center

"Throughout history, many people have tried to abuse the name of Husain, monsters like Saddam for example, who were actually against the ideology of Imam Husain. On the contrary, Imam Husain's mission was about peace, about the love of God, about helping people. That's the beauty of his message."

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) Considered the greatest British historian of his time.

"In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader." [The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, London, 1911, volume 5, pp. 391-2]

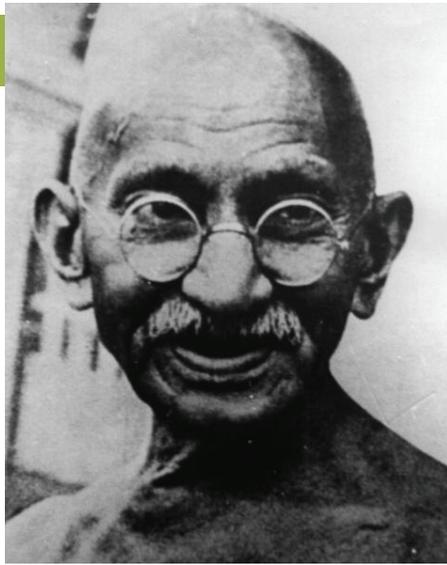
Thomas Carlyle

"The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Karbala is that Husayn and his companions were the rigid believers of God. They illustrated that numerical superiority does not count when it comes to truth and falsehood. The victory of Husayn despite his minority marvels me!"

Reynold Alleyne Nicholson

(1868-1945) University of
Cambridge.

"Muhammadan tradition, which with rare exceptions is uniformly hostile to the Umayyad dynasty, regards Husain as a martyr and Yazid as his murderer."



I learned from Husain
how to be oppressed,
yet victorious
Mahatma Ghandi

Imam Husain b. 'Ali cont...

Prophet had been killed (by the Umayyads) and innovations revived."

A careful analysis of the speeches and letters preserved by our primary sources indicate that Husain perceived the need to revive the religious conscience of the Muslims. His actions indicate that he was aware of the fact that a victory achieved through military strength and might is always temporal because another power can, in the future, bring it down in ruins.

But a victory achieved through suffering and sacrifice is everlasting and leaves a permanent imprint on human consciousness.

It was because of the desire to revolutionize the minds of the feeble-minded Muslims on the one hand and to check the gradual decadence of Islamic principles on the other that Husain embarked on a fateful journey to

Kufa despite the dangers that he foresaw. He was intercepted at al-Qadisiyya by a small detachment of troops under the command of Hurr. It was at this point that Husain began addressing the enemy. He explained his stance, stating that Yazid was trying to establish an unjust and corrupt society and that he had violated all moral and religious norms.

Imam Husain clearly enunciated that he would never submit to oppression and tyranny. As he stated when he was asked to pay allegiance to Yazid: "Those like me can never give allegiance to those like him."

Although Husain was denied water for three days under the scorching sun of Karbala, he remained resolute and firm in his principles. He preferred honorable death than life under tyranny and

oppression. As he said: **"I do not view death except as a path to everlasting happiness while living under the oppressors is abject humiliation."**

Imam Husain's noble companions shared his determination and were prepared to die for his cause. On the fateful morning of the 10th of Muharram, Husain stood in front of his tent with a very small army. Preparing himself for the forthcoming encounter, he delivered a series of speeches and admonitions to his enemies.

He repeatedly explained to them why he refused to submit to Yazid and reminded them of his close proximity to the Prophet Muhammad. He also told them that he would never submit to Yazid rather, he would submit to God only.

One by one, Husain's brave companions died in front of his eyes. He witnessed

Imam Husain b. 'Ali – The Model for Human kind cont...

the fall of every one of them, running to the battlefield to retrieve the dead ones and lining their bodies in a row in a tent. As the day grew hotter, the fighting became more fierce. Even 'Ali Asghar (also called Abd Allah), a six-month-old baby, was not spared. An arrow struck him killing him in his father's arms.

Alone and weary, exhausted and dejected, Imam Husain consoled the grief stricken women and children for what would befall them after his demise. After bidding them farewell for the final time, Husain confronted the Umayyad army. Attacked from all sides with stones, spears and arrows, the Imam finally succumbed while his womenfolk and children witnessed the horrific scene.

Husain though, remained resolute to the very last. He invoked God saying:

“O God, You are my only trust in every calamity, You are my only hope in every hardship; You are the only promise in anxiety and distress in which the hearts become weak and human actions become feeble, in which one is deserted and forsaken by his friends.”

As the enemy encircled Imam Husain to deal the final blows, Zaynab, Husain's sister, came out of her tent and cried out to 'Umar b. Sa'd the commander-in-chief, “Will Husain be killed while you are standing by and watching?” Zaynab's pleas were to no avail. Husain's head was cut off and raised on a spear as a sign of victory for the Umayyad army. The women and children were enslaved and taken to Yazid in Damascus.

Husain, it is true, was slain in the plains of Kerbala. But memories of his supreme sacrifices have re-

mained alive. His death stirred the consciousness of the Muslims in general and the people Kufa in particular. Many of them rose against the Umayyads, avenging Husain's death.

The tragedy of Kerbala will evoke and stir the minds of even the coldest and most stone hearted reader. For Imam Husain's supreme sacrifice provided a model for all the oppressed nations of the world, showing how, through struggle and sacrifice, truth will finally triumph over falsehood. This is shown by the fact that today Imam Husain is regarded as a hero and champion of truth whereas Yazid is portrayed as the chieftain of oppression and vices.

To you, O Imam Husain, we send our salutations and greetings. The message and principles you fought for will forever remain alive.

Let us end by quoting Imam Husain's words which best describe the motives for his actions:

“If the religion of Muhammad cannot be saved except by my being killed, then O swords come and get me!”

Dr. Takim is a professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Denver and is a world renowned author and translator.



Sayings of Imam Husain

“O God, what did he find who lost you, and what did he lose who found you?”

“Some people worship God to gain His gifts; this is the worship of the merchants. Some worship Him to avoid His punishment; this is the worship of the slaves. Some worship Him solely to show gratitude towards Him; this is the worship of the free!”

“Death with dignity is better than life with humiliation.”

“One who pursues a goal through sinful ways, will ironically distance himself from that goal, and will approach what he was afraid of.”

“Wisdom will not be complete except by following the truth.”

“The most generous person is the one who offers help to those who do not expect him to help.”

“Tolerance is man's ornament, keeping promises is a sign of nobility, and bonding with others is a grace.”



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Islamic Information Center (IIC) is a non-profit grass-roots organization formed for the purpose of informing the public, mainly through the media, about the true teachings of Islam and beliefs of Muslims.

The mission of Islamic Information Center is to provide an accurate source of Islamic Information and to correct misconceptions about Islam. The Islamic Information Center disseminates information about Islam in accordance with the Divine teachings of the Holy Quran.

Islamic Information Center was established by a group of concerned professionals from all walks of American life under the leadership of an eminent Scholar, Imam Syed Naqvi. The IIC headquarters are located in the National Press Building in Washington D.C

Frequently Asked Questions About Islam

What does Islam mean?

Islam means peace achieved through the submission to the Almighty God.

If Islam steps from peace and understanding, why are there certain so-called Muslims who do not believe in peace?

People are like that because of their ignorance. Islam believes in a philosophy of co-existence, live in peace, and let others live in peace. If one doesn't believe this, it is because of ignorance.

What is the Qur'an and what is it about?

The Qur'an is the last revelation of God among the divine revelations such as the Psalms, Torah, and the Bible. It is a comprehensive book that talks about every aspect of creation. Holy Qur'an "There is not a wet or dry thing on the earth that is not in the Qur'an."

What does Islam say about those who die who are not Muslims, but still possess good virtues, ie. Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, and so forth?

Islam is philosophically based on justice. Whoever does good, will be rewarded by God either in this life or in the next.

What is a 'Muslim'?

A Muslim is a person who submits to his Creator only.

How does someone become a Muslim?

A person must completely believe in the three above-mentioned things.

Why is Islam so demanding on rules and restrictions, like praying five times a day?

Islam wants the followers to be organized and the five daily prayers makes a person disciplined. Rules and restrictions create an organized and disciplined society.

Do Islam, Judaism, and Christianity have different origins?

No, we believe Judaism, Christianity and Islam have the same origin, each believing in monotheism.

How did Muhammad become a Prophet and a Messenger of God?

Prophet Muhammad (saw) was the last Prophet in the chain of Prophets chosen by God.

Does Islam tolerate other beliefs?

Islam is the most tolerant philosophy as the Qur'an rightly says: "There is no compulsion in religion."

Why is the family structure so important to Muslims?

The family is the foundation block of the society through which the society can achieve tranquility.

What is the status of women in Islam?

Islam believes in the equality of the status of men and women, and as a mother, women are given higher status. Our traditions say: Paradise lies under the foot of your mother.

Your source for authentic information about Islam and Muslims.



www.IslamicInformationCenter.org

