

## Mufti Muhammad Jameel 1953-2004

Balanced and  
non-sectarian scholar

Muhammad Jameel Khan, 52, was born in Karachi in 1953 and assassinated on 9 October 2004. As was his normal routine, he was on his way for *maghrib* prayers when two unknown bike-riders intercepted the van that he had been driving, sprayed it with bullets and drove away. Both the mufti and his close associate, **Maulana Nazeer Ahmad Taunsavi**, 46, who was accompanying him, died almost on the spot.

A graduate of the famous Jami'a al-'Uloom Islamia, Binnori Town, in Karachi, Muhammad Jameel Khan had specialised in Hadith studies and qualified as a mufti. He had studied under such noted scholars as **Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Binnori**, **Mufti Wali Hasan Tonki**, **Maulana Muhammad Idris Meerathi** and

**Maulana Misbahullah Shah**.

Mufti Muhammad Jameel was regarded as a balanced and non-sectarian scholar. For the past 20 years he had been editing and contributing to the Islamic Page and the Q&A feature of a major national daily. He had also set up a chain of some 108 children's school – *Iqra Roza-i-Atfal* or Reading Garden for Children – which provided primary education to 38,000 boys and girls.

He was also an active member of Jami'atul 'Ulama-e-Islam (Fazlur Rahman group) and had served as the Jami'at's Central Publicity Secretary. He had been more active, however, as the central council member and spokesman of the Majlis of the International Khatam-e-Nabuwat.

The majlis had been working to counter the Qadiyani heresy and their machinations as they had somehow come to enjoy the patronage of the country's secular oligarchy and were trying to undermine the Islamic foundations of the national polity. The founder of the group, **Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani** (1835-

1908) was a self-admitted British agent and had claimed to be a 'prophet'. The mufti also travelled around the world, addressing seminars and conferences about the Qadiyani problem.

In the past four years, two other leading Islamic scholars associated with the Khatam-e-Nabuwat movement have died at the hands of unknown and unapprehended assassins. The first to be eliminated was the head of the movement **Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Ludhianvi** (18 May 2000) followed by **Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai** (30 May 2004). Mufti Jameel's assassination was widely condemned and condoled, across the political divide, from **President Pervez Musharraf** to the opposition leader, **Maulana Fazlur Rahman**.

\* **Maulana Nazeer Taunsavi** was born in Ghazi Khan, Punjab, and had come to Karachi nine years ago. He was an 'alim graduate in Islamic studies from Faisalabad and headed the Karachi branch of the majlis.

■ **Ebadat Husain**

## Abdul Zahra Usman 1943-2004

Moderate from the marshlands

Abdul Zahra Usman (aka Izzedin Salim), 61, who was assassinated in Baghdad in a suicide car bomb on 17 May 2004 was the most prominent figure in the interim government of Iraq to suffer such a fate after the overthrow of Saddam Husain. He was the head of the US-appointed rotating presidency of the governing council for May.

He had come a long way since his birth in 1943 in humble surroundings in the village of al-Huwayr on the Euphrates. His village is situated some 500 miles northwest of Basra, just to the west of Qurna where the Euphrates and Tigris meet, in the heart of the marshlands of Southern Iraq.

Abdul Zahra Usman was born into a pious Shi'i family which had produced 'ulama. He was educated mainly at Basra where he graduated from the university. He was of a scholarly and literary bent and his talents as a writer first attracted notice in the early 1960s when he published a book on Fatima [*Radi-Allahu anha*], daughter of the Prophet, *Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam*; The 'ulama of Najaf lavished praise on it.

In the late 1960s he joined the recently founded Hizb al-Da'wah al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Call Party) whose leading light was **Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir**

al-Sadr (assassinated in April 1980). The party became more active politically and anti-Ba'ath in the 1970s. In 1975 and 1978 Abdul Zahra Usman was imprisoned, but he managed to flee to Kuwait in 1980.

However, later he escaped to Iran where he became closely associated with the late **Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim** (assassinated last summer in Najaf) and his Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). There he edited several newspapers and journals and, on behalf of SCIRI, took part in forays into Southern Iraq against the regime. It was then that he adopted the name of Izzedin Salim fearing for the safety of family members in Iraq should his true identity be known.

Like his mentor, **Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim**, Usman became increasingly pragmatic after the Anglo-American invasion put an end to the regime of Saddam Husain. After the war, in July, he agreed to become a member of the newly set-up Iraqi Governing Council. He did not envisage an Iraq on the model of the Iranian Islamic Republic. He worked for a free and democratic Iraq, free of sectarianism in any form, where there was cooperation and mutual respect between the various religious and ethnic groupings. Usman detested extremism and violence and he was liked by Sunnis and Shi'is alike.

■ **A B D R Eagle**

## AbdurRahman Habannakah 1927-2004

Scholar of the classical  
and contemporary

A famous Syrian Islamic scholar, **Shaikh AbdurRahman Bin Hasan Habannakah al-Maidani**, 77, died on 10 August 2004. Son of another distinguished scholar, **Shaikh Hasan Habannakah**, he was born in Damascus in 1927. AbdurRahman received his early education at Ma'had at-Tawjih al-Islami in Damascus and took his first as well as masters degree from al-Azhar University in Cairo. He returned to Syria, became a teacher and rose as director general of Islamic education in the Ministry of Awqaf.

Shaikh AbdurRahman then joined the Ummul Qura University at Makkah al-Mukarramah where he achieved fame and prominence as faquih, scholar and author. He wrote on contemporary themes like Atheism, Communism, Orientalism and Zionism as well as on religious subjects. His published works included, *al-'Aqida al-Islamiyya was Ususuha*, *Fiqh ad-D'awah al-lillah*, *Kawashif Zu'yuf fil Madhahib al Fikriyya al-Mu'asirah* and is works *Basayir lil-Muslim al-Mu'asir*.

Because of ill health he had returned to Damascus where he breathed his last.