



On behalf of the Al-Risalah staff and MSA Shura, we hope you enjoy this issue. Please understand that this is the culmination of the hard work of your fellow students and the Scholars of our community; therefore it needs to be treated with due respect. If you are not going to read the issue, kindly refrain from using it otherwise. Many of the articles, if not all, have direct Islamic themes therein, and some may include verses from the Holy Qur'an or Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, it is to our common understanding that everyone will treasure this humble work. May Allah (SWT) allow Al-Risalah to serve as the beacon of light it is intended to be, Aameen.

# Welcome to Al-Risalah

**Muhammad Saifullah**  
*Newsletter Coordinator*

Dear Readers, Assalaamua'laykum!

Wow, is it Fall 2012 already? Time sure does fly, huh?

Being a part of the MSA over the past three years has truly meant a lot to me and I have gained many rewarding experiences as a member of this wonderful organization. One of the most rewarding endeavors is, without question, Al-Risalah. I began working with a dedicated team of students on this newsletter back in 2010. We saw many people move on, new folks join in, numerous remarkable submissions over the semesters, and many successful issues produced. What started out as simply a student-based newsletter now includes articles from scholars from across the country and even the world! The honor of showcasing the works of such scholars has always been my favorite segment in each new and exciting issue we release. I thank our U'lamaa from the bottom of my heart for sharing their wisdom with students thirsting

for sacred knowledge.

In addition to serving as a lantern for sacred knowledge, Al-Risalah also serves as the voice of the members of the MSA. Over the semesters, we have received amazing works from students with a diverse array of experiences. It is my honor and pleasure to have been selected to serve as the coordinator for such a project. InshaAllah I will do my best to keep Al-Risalah a platform for scholarship and reflection. This semester, we have a dedicated and enthusiastic team of writers, designers, editors, and printers, and it has been a privilege working with them to produce for you this very first issue for the 2012-2013 school year. Al-Risalah has seen many changes and additions over the issues, but we always welcome new ideas and folks who want to join us. If anyone would like to join the Risalah Team and help out with articles, editing submissions, designing the newsletter, and/or printing issues, please feel free to contact me. I hope to work with you all to make this semester our best yet inshaAllah! Jazak Allahu Khayr.

# Loyola MSA Welcome Dinner 2012

**Shaziya Barkat**  
*Al-Risalah Editor*

Students, families, and friends came together at Loyola University Chicago on September 8th to start the year off with the best: luscious food, engaging company, and a thought-provoking speech. "If you were to see reality...what would you then see?" proposed Professor Omer M. Mozaffar at the annual Muslim Student Association's Welcome Dinner.

The MSA's Sisters Advisor Anwar Abdullah took the stage, sending a warm welcome and introducing guests to what Loyola's Muslim Students Association is truly about. Promoting unity, faith, and values, the MSA

seeks to enlighten and bring together students with diverse backgrounds under the belief of one God, the final Prophet (PBUH), and the last testament. Loyola's very own Professor Mozaffar expressed what true spirituality is and how individuals can integrate it into their daily lives.

"Ask yourself, what do you mean by spirituality?" he began. "One way to define spirituality is to be unbound by any rules. A second way is physical, psychological, or mental intoxication. A third way is exhilaration from rational thought (ie. studying ideas)." Thus, the first step to achieving spirituality is un-

# From the MSA President's Desk

**Shahid Barkat**  
*MSA President*

When I first entered Loyola, I was a lost Muslim kid at a Catholic University, merely trying to find my own niche. One day, I stumbled upon the mosque on the 8th floor of Mundelein. I walked into a small, cramped room that was surprisingly irradiated with laughter and enjoyment. It was a place not only for prayer but also for hanging out, eating, doing homework, studying, and getting advice. But most importantly, it was to a place to meet new people. It was here that I met some of the most influential Muslim brothers that have shaped who I am today.

As I take on the position of president, it is my privilege to give back to the MSA community that has helped me so much over the past three years. As your president, I welcome all the incoming freshmen, transfers, and returning students to the Muslim Students' Association and to Loyola University Chicago. I humbly invite you to join us at the mosque at the Mundelein Center in Room 811 and request that you participate in anything that might interest you. I sincerely hope that the MSA can help you succeed during your time on campus and also be a source of guidance for you. May Allah Bless you all and Make you successful in all your endeavors, aamen.

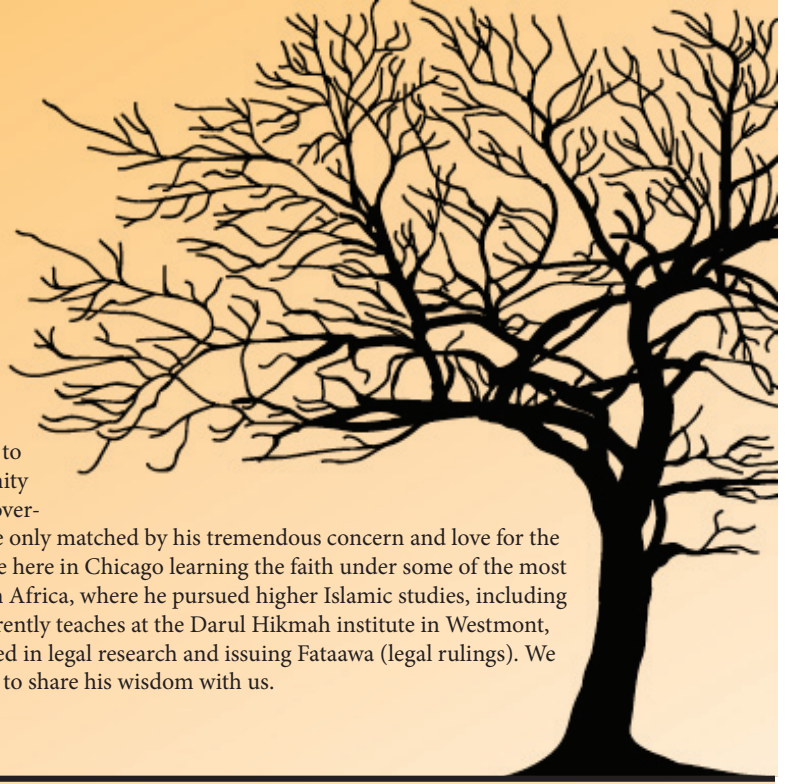


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# Dear Mufti...

Bismillah Al-Rahmaan Al-Raheem

Alhamdulillah, for this issue's Dear Mufti section, we are blessed to have the responses of Mufti Abrar Mirza. Known in the community and among his fellow scholars and students as "the immaculate over-achiever," Mufti Abrar's exceptional scholarship and expertise are only matched by his tremendous concern and love for the community's youth. A young scholar himself, he spent some time here in Chicago learning the faith under some of the most prominent scholars of our community. He then traveled to South Africa, where he pursued higher Islamic studies, including his Iftaa (Mufti) course, under world renowned scholars. He currently teaches at the Darul Hikmah institute in Westmont, IL alongside Mufti Hussain and Maulana Bilal, and is also engaged in legal research and issuing Fataawa (legal rulings). We are very grateful that he could take time out of his busy schedule to share his wisdom with us.



**Dear Mufti:** *This semester, I'm taking a philosophy class at the far end of campus, where most of my other Muslim friends rarely venture. I'm isolated and for the past three weeks I've run into both ardent atheists and strong believers of other religions alike. They keep urging me to convert to their ways and practices and constantly put me on the spot! It's really getting to a point where I feel reluctant to even go to class. How can I respectfully leave that conversation without feeling shameful or degrading others? Or should I talk to them about Islam instead? Is there a way to appease both parties in this situation?*

*Sincerely, Disturbed Sister*

**Disturbed Sister,** Indeed, this is a serious issue and it is amongst the reasons why I discourage Muslim students from enrolling in philosophy classes. I would encourage you to listen to the recording of Br. Hamza Tzortzis's lecture at Darul Hikmah on 9/29 regarding common questions posed by atheists, as well as read and listen to other material on this line. This not only helps in strengthening one's iman (faith) to fight off attacks, but also helps in being on the offense instead of defense. At times, the Quran asks the disbelievers questions that make them realize their falsehood, whereas, at times, it answers objections. Either approach we take is in line with the Quran. However, we should not feel obliged to entertain them at all times, especially if we are not prepared for such debates. Sometimes, it is best to follow another teaching of the Quran and say, "To you your religion and to me mine" (Quran 109:6). Always realize that you are on the haqq (truth) and batil (falsehood) is bound to vanish and be defeated (Quran 17:81), even if you may not know the answer to their objections. The only answers you need to know, and the only ones that matter, are the ones of the grave that determine a person's eternal abode, i.e. who is your Lord, what is your religion, and who is your prophet (Tirmidhi). Finally, continue to keep the company of the pious, as it a means of strengthening your iman. And Allah knows best.

**Dear Mufti:** *The question I am about to ask is one I had hoped to just ignore and not even dignify with an exchange as such. I hope you will forgive me if this offends you, but I just cannot overlook this issue anymore. It's that disgusting movie which attempted to denigrate Rasoolullah (Messenger of Allah) (S) by portraying a false image to the masses. I'm really disturbed by it and feel unrest that someone had the audacity to do such a thing in the name of "freedom of expression." But I'm also saddened by how the Muslims in the Middle East reacted to this sacrilege; unnecessarily killing and creating chaos is never the solution. I feel like I'm caught between disgust over the movie and sadness over how volatile the Ummah (nation) has become. Please share with me your thoughts regarding this matter if you don't mind. Is there something I can do as a college student? I feel like I just cannot sit by and watch this anymore... What is the appropriate way to deal with this?*

*Jazak Allahu Khayr, Muslim College Student*

**Muslim College Student,** This is a lengthy topic and it is difficult to summarize into this small section. Know that ridicule and insults against the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) are not new and existed even during his life. However, Allah Ta'ala (Allah, Most High) commanded the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to continue with his obligations and not worry about the disbelievers, assuring him that He will suffice against the scoffers (Quran 15:94-95). We should follow the same advice as well. We should not bring attention to such filth in the first place, nor react emotionally and irrationally, such that it hurts the global reputation of the Muslims. Allah Ta'ala tells us that good and evil are not the same, and that we are to repel evil with that which is better. Then, we will see those who have enmity against us become as though they were close friends (Quran 41:34). We need to teach people the true character and personality of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) through our words and actions. However, we need to first reflect inwardly and ask how much do we ourselves know about him. When was the last time we read a book of sirah (prophetic biography) or sat down to discuss his life? We set one event in the month of Rabi al-Awwal for discussing the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) and that is it until the next year! If we have true love for him, we can not discuss him enough. Allah Ta'ala, from His true love of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), mentions him repeatedly in the Quran, at times by titles and at times, by name. Such is Allah Ta'ala's love that He even mentions individual body parts of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), such as his face (2:144), eyes (20:131), tongue (19:97), hand (17:29), chest (7:2), heart (26:194), and back (94:3). May Allah Ta'ala grant us the true love and obedience of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), aameen. And Allah knows best.

**Dear Mufti:** *I'm taking a ton of classes this semester and I'm really trying to keep my prayers on track too. As hard as it is, fitting prayers into my schedule is even harder when I try to pray at the MSA. Whenever I want to pray in jama'ah with a group of brothers, there's always one person who has yet to make wudhu. That person is usually vehement that we not get started without him. When he comes back, someone else leaves and the cycle continues. If some of the brothers are on a schedule, should we just get started? Or what if the prayer time is inching towards a makroob (disliked) time, such as for A3r? Maybe I should just pray by myself...*

*Regards, Overwhelmed Brother*

**Overwhelmed Brother,** If there is a set time for prayer and no permanent imam, then those present should appoint an imam from amongst themselves and start the prayer. It is neither necessary nor advisable to wait for everyone to make wudu (ablution), as this will be difficult on others and discourage them from attending the jama'ah in the future. If there is no fixed prayer time and a few brothers are ready to pray, whereas others are not, then those who are ready may start their congregation, while the others may join late or make a separate congregation afterward. However, the above rulings are when people are in a hurry and restricted on time. If it is possible for people to wait for everyone, then they should do so and form a single, larger congregation. Under no circumstances should a prayer be delayed into a makruh (disliked) time. And Allah knows best.



Would you like to have your questions answered by Mufti Hussain or Mufti Abrar, and featured in future issues inshaAllah? Brothers, please contact Muhammad Saifullah (saifire1027@gmail.com). Sisters, please contact Yara Shams (yarashams@gmail.com). We limit questions to 2-3 per issue, so space is limited! However, any questions not featured can appear in future issues, so please don't hold back and benefit from this blessed opportunity.

# Are You Ready for Dhul Hijjah? A Quick and Easy Guide

**Ustadha Bint Ahmad**  
*Islamic Scholar*

In the Qur'an, Allah takes an oath: "And the 10 nights" (Al-Fajr: V 2)

Many of the Qur'anic exegetes including Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid and many from them state that the ten nights mentioned in this verse refer to the first ten days of Dhul al-Hijjah, and this is the correct opinion. (Ibn Kathir)

The ten nights by which Allah takes an oath are full of merits. The days in and of themselves are virtuous as are the performance of righteous deeds within them. This can be understood from the words of our beloved Messenger (SWS).

Ibn 'Abbas narrates: The Messenger (SWS) said: "There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these days" (i.e the first ten days of Dhu 'l-Hijjah). (Bukhari)

Hafiz Ibn Hajr al-'Asqalani mentions: The reason why the first ten days of Dhu 'l-Hijjah are distinguished is due to it being the time in which the foundational worships are collectively carried out i.e. salat, fasting, charity and hajj are carried out in conjunction with one another. These acts are not carried out collectively in any other days. (Fath al-Bari)

Acts One Can Perform On the First 10 Days:

After becoming aware of the various virtues the first ten days enjoy, it is essential that one does not let these days pass without performing righteous deeds and striving to attain eternal success. These are golden days where a believer can easily be forgiven and elevated as well as attain the pleasure of Allah, Most High.

Some of the acts one can undertake are:

## 1. Fasting the first nine days or as many as one can keep.

Hunaydah ibn Khalid narrated upon the authority of his wife who said, "Some of the wives of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) told me that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) used to fast the Day of 'Ashurah, the first nine days of Dhu 'l-Hijjah, and three days out of every month". (Ahmad, Nasa'i)



## 2. Dhikr (remembrance of Allah).

This can be done by saying the takbir (Allahu akbar), the tahmid (al-hamdu li-Allah), the tasbih (subhana al-Allah) and the tahlil (la ilaha illa al-Allah).

Allah says, "...and recite Allah's name in specified days" (al-Hajj: V28).

The specified days refer to the first ten days of Dhu 'l-Hijjah. By remembering Allah in these days one will be directly following the recommendation in this verse.

## 3. Repentance.

During these blessed days there is a great opportunity to benefit from the extra benevolence unveiled from Allah, hence; one should set aside time to repent for all sins - minor and major.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing be upon him) said, "The one who repents from sins is like he who has no sin." (Ibn Majah, Bayhaqi)

## 4. Refraining from sins.

It is important that each Muslim acknowledges that in order to gain the maximum benefit from righteous actions, it is essential to abstain from sins. Even if a person cannot perform any supererogatory acts, the least one should do is refrain from sin. One must be mindful of every type of sin, from

the violation of the rights of Allah, to the rights of the creation of Allah, including sins of the physical body and sins of the tongue.

## 5. Increase in supererogatory acts in general.

These are days in which any righteous deed is more beloved in the eyes of Allah and more virtuous than if the very same acts were to be performed in the normal days of the year. This could include:

### a. Recitation of the Qur'an.

Often after the month of the Ramadan one loses the habit of reciting the Qur'an regularly. Use these days to increase in the recitation of the beautiful words of Allah to re-establish daily recitation.

### b. Maintain ties.

When one becomes busy with work or studying maintaining good relationships with family, neighbours and friends becomes difficult. These days are a prime time to maintain good ties.

### c. Supplicating to Allah.

This is a believer's link to conversing with Allah. One should use these days to express one's gratitude and ask for one's lawful worldly needs as well as salvation in the hereafter.

### d. Giving in charity.

*This is an excerpt of Ustadha Bint Ahmad's article "The Blessed Days of Dhu 'l-Hijjah: Its Virtues and Various Acts to Perform", courtesy of ilmgate.org*

# National SJP Conference: an important opportunity to challenge campus censorship



**Rahim Kurwa**

*SJP UCLA, Columbia University*

The upcoming National SJP Conference is an important opportunity for students around the country to meet, educate each other, and formulate strategies for the growing campus Palestine solidarity movement. Recent experiences of SJPs on the West Coast illustrate the urgent need for collaboration across schools.

This summer has seen a massive fight over student rights at the University of California, where a recent Campus Climate investigation has recommended broad forms of censorship designed to limit students' ability to freely criticize Israeli state policies. By claiming that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic, the University's Campus Climate committee justifies recommendations to ban speakers from campus and force groups to provide balanced speakers at political events about the Middle East.

SJPs, Jewish solidarity groups, and free speech groups have responded to the report by highlighting the exclusion of Jewish students who themselves criticize Israeli policy, the lack of evidence to the claim that SJPs have engaged in offensive speech, and the constitutional illegality of several of the report's recommendations. There has been wide public outcry against the report and a petition to rescind it has been signed by 2,500 people. In response, pro-Israel groups lobbied the California State Assembly to pass a resolution (HR 35) supporting the investigation and doubling down on the claim that criticizing Israel is anti-Semitic. Later reporting revealed that the University of California had advised the authors on the bill's language before eventually dissenting from its final language. In comparison to other fights, such as the effort to deny tenure to Joseph Massad at Columbia University, HR 35 is a serious development in

the censorship of student groups as it marks the first time a state legislature has stepped in to encourage censorship at a university.

Of course, these efforts to silence SJPs are an indication of the success SJPs have had so far in educating the public and generating pressure for divestment from companies collaborating with Israeli violations of international law. Despite attempts to smear their good record, one of the strengths of SJPs is their commitment to anti-racist principles, which has facilitated exciting collaborations with allied struggles across the country. The past year has also seen a tremendous growth in activism, with campus chapters becoming more active across the country and BDS resolutions passing in Arizona and Indiana. Israeli Apartheid Week, the TIAA-CREF campaign, and the Right to Education Week have also grown significantly, and students at the UC are resisting censorship with a new resolution against HR 35 and plans for increased activism during the upcoming year.

One critical way that students can resist censorship and find new ways to organize successfully is through the National SJP Conference. Now in its second year, this conference will bring together students from 130 schools across the country, training young activists, sharing knowledge and experiences, and developing new strategies for effective organizing. Volunteers have been organizing this conference throughout the summer, but we need financial support in order for it to be successful. By making a contribution, you can help students from across the country attend the conference and continue developing their campus chapters. Help us keep working and help us keep growing!

To donate, visit [sjpnational.org/donate](http://sjpnational.org/donate). All help is appreciated!

# Dinner: Developing *shukr* or gratitude

*Continued from page 1*

derstanding what it essentially means.

“Everything is an ayah (sign) of something else. [Imagine seeing] a leaf falling from a tree,” continued Prof. Mozaffar, “You’re going to be inclined to think that it’s a sign of the start of fall or the idea that school might begin. We are socially conditioned to think that way.”

However, there are “filters” that blind us, such as today’s encompassing pop culture. What Professor Mozaffar is implying is that we must look past these filters and see the bestilled beauty of our Creator and to remember the purpose of this Dunya through His signs. It is only then that one begins to value oneself and those around one with greater significance. “One life is so valuable you can’t even measure it,” agrees Prof. Mozaffar.

The sense of one’s own value and appreciation of natural beauty leads to the most significant aspects of spirituality: *shukr* or gratitude. As Professor Mozaffar puts it in his concluding words, once *shukr* is devel-



oped, we must “pay it forward.” Not only were we privileged to such an insightful speech, but we had a great opportunity to build new friendships.

“The welcome dinner was a really nice way of getting a bunch of Muslims together just to meet each other and make friends,” explains freshman Sana Baig, “I definitely met a lot of people who I would never have met otherwise...I really think that’s the main point of these dinners: to build a sense of community with the people.”

The event was open to all students and the collaboration between individuals from diverse faiths truly made it a memorable experience. Guests from other colleges including Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and DePaul University also partook in the festivities. The dinner also gave the MSA brothers and sisters a chance to introduce themselves to those new to Loyola and to explain what college life at Loyola is all about.

## The Cure

**Mohammad Moiz Akhtar**  
*Al Risalah Writer*

On August 5th, 2012, a gunman walked into a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin and opened fire on seven Sikh worshippers before being shot by an Oak Creek police officer. The very next day in Joplin, Missouri, a masjid was burned; the attack was allegedly a second arson attempt after the first one had failed earlier in July. And on August 10th, a local resident living in Morton Grove, Illinois was seen shooting a high-velocity air rifle outside the Muslim Education Center. Finally, on August 12th, a two-liter bottle filled with acid was thrown at CPSA, an Islamic school located in Lombard, Illinois.

All these events had taken place during the holy month of Ramadan, but a more recent incident occurred in France. Charlie Hebedo, a French writer, released several naked caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This caused riot and infuriated Muslims. In another case in Southern California, a video released on YouTube

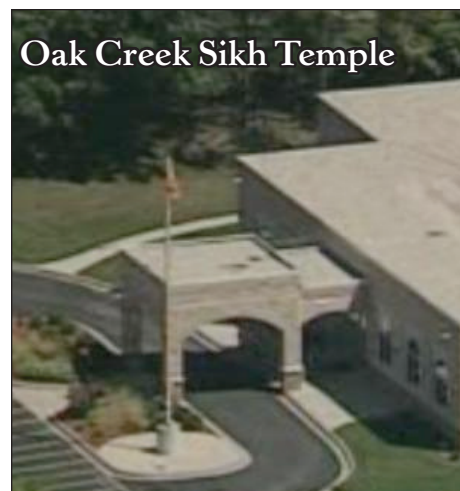
showed the city of Orange County protesting against Muslims outside a masjid yelling certain phrases similar to “go back to your homeland” although the majority of Muslims present were American-born citizens.

Hate is not the answer to hate and these turmoils that our Ummah is facing must not influence us to leave our religion. If anything, all the attention will amplify the general public’s curiosity of Islam, giving us the opportunity as Muslims to correct these

islamophobes by illustrating the beauty and simplicity of Islam. Killing innocent people during protests and burning buildings is exactly what they want us to do. These behaviors are exploited in the media which turns islamophobes viral.

Is Islamophobia curable? YES! I’m no doctor, but I’m assured there is always a solution to every problem. Islam teaches us to stand firmly for justice and Allah (SWT) has given us a deen that touches all aspects of our life. No matter how bad the situation is, Muslims must always be confident in illustrating Islam’s teachings as a solution to these problems that we face. Hate and ignorance are the roots of why all of these attacks have been ongoing. Our job as Muslims is to engage ourselves in the public and illustrate the virtues of Islam.

Our time is now. We need to act now and cure this epidemic before we realize it’s too late. Don’t be afraid to speak up. Be the first one to voice your opinion, be the first one in your group to initiate a change, and most importantly, don’t ever give up on the Ummah because the Muslim Ummah will never give up on you.



# The Syrian Conflict: An Overview

Noor Hamadeh  
*Guest Writer*

In early Spring of 2011, the arrest and torture of a group of young Syrian boys resulted in an uprising against the Syrian government. The boys, unaware of the extremity of their actions, graffitied the walls of their school with the phrase, “Down with the Regime.” The government’s immediate crackdown against peaceful protesters caused the already displeased people to further their discontent with the government.

Let’s take a step back in time to the election of the current Syrian president, Bashar Alassad. Alassad succeeded his father, Hafez Alassad, who passed away in June 2000. Many hoped that Bashar would be a much more lenient ruler than his father had been. When he took office in 2000, Bashar legalized cell phone and internet use, released a large number of people that had been imprisoned under his father, and created eco-

nomie reform. What he avoided, however, was the state of emergency that the Syrian state had been under since the Ba’ath party had taken power. As government violence has escalated, so too has the amount of people protesting against it.

Originally, the Syrian people mobilized in favor of government reform, which they hoped would alter oppressive legislation. The government’s violent crackdown, however, pushed people to fight for the collapse of the entire Assad regime. After months of violent suppression of protesters, many individuals began to mobilize and militarize, gaining weaponry and organizing themselves in order to resist the oppressive regime. The conflict began in the small southern town of Daraa and has slowly made its way to the Syrian capital of Damascus. The international community has condemned Assad for his use of violence against protesters. Unfortunately, Chinese and Russian support of the Syrian regime prevents any

UN involvement in the conflict. Assad’s unwillingness to stand down has resulted in Syria’s loss of Arab League membership. Despite all this, Western countries such as the United States refuse to get involved in the conflict.

According to recent data from the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights (SOHR), the death toll in Syria has reached over 29,000, the majority being civilian deaths. Since the conflict began in March 2011, many people have been arrested without charge, tortured, and killed in imprisonment—these are not included in the above-mentioned toll.

Despite the efforts of the rebel forces, there seems to be no end in sight to the conflict. Assad continues to claim that the rebel forces are a minority of the population that will not be successful in toppling the government. As Assad continues to shell and bomb innocent civilians, the opposition forces will continue to fight against his army.



# Life's like a box of chocolates?



**TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES  
PLEASE STAND BY**

**Shaziya Barkat**

[www.faithpeacelove.wordpress.com](http://www.faithpeacelove.wordpress.com)

Nah. It's more like an action-packed game of Diablo. Once you get past the part where a falling star awakens the dead, that is. But after that, it's simple: you're fighting the minions of hell in attempt to save the world. We've all probably been through our own Depths of Hell. Some probably nastier than others. But ultimately, it all comes down to the same battle: you against the demons.

In Diablo, you take on roles as Witch Doctor, Demon Hunter, Wizard, Barbarian, and Monk. All of them possess different skills, strengths, and weaknesses. However, with every fight across the map, they come across new equipment that can be added to their inventory to build up their armor. That's life: the more the fights, the bigger, better, and stronger we become.

Throughout the game, each character can level up as they slay more demons. As you continue, you may also move from one difficulty level to another: normal, nightmare, hell, and inferno. It's all about skill and experience: the more we learn, the more we have of them. That ultimately shapes who we are. So, even when there's hardship after hardship, don't give up. The stronger the individual, the harder the tests.

So how can you level up through life?

Act I: A falling star has struck and woken the dead. You realize that a battle is about to begin. First step: admit those unwanted hab-

its that have awakened in you in the past year. The change initiative begins here.

Act II and Act III: Now you're roaming the map fighting demons in cities like Caldeum, Alcaranus, and other Barbarian lands. You might die a couple of times, but that's okay. It's a learning process. Struggles to become better are difficult battles. In the game, you have companions that can revive you when the going gets tough.

Act IV: You've beat all the little minions, but now you're faced with the worst one of them all: The Prime Evil, Diablo. This is your nafs (your own soul and its desires) and this probably involves one of the hardest inner struggles you'll go through. However, you've got the experience, the equipment, and the skills to win. Take your best shot.

As a special note to all my Muslim brothers and sisters, it hasn't been too long since Ramadan has ended. Throughout Ramadan, God gave you the opportunity to win life's battles and to level up in His Eyes. Although the minions of the Depths of Hell have broken loose again, we now have gained experience and strengthened ourselves so we can face the real battle in this world.

It's time to level up.



# Breaking Free from the Shadows

Anonymous

We often take time out of our lives to get a deeper sense of things. From merely analyzing poems for a class to the greater issues in our lives, many of us often turn to our friends for support. Yet, sadly, we fail to get a deeper sense of the guidance that Islam can provide us in our daily activities. We forget that the purpose of Islam is to help us through our trials and errors, and to bring meaning to our everyday lives.

We rely primarily on external sources for advice and forget the teachings of Allah (SWT). We forget this due to our failure to actively think about our daily experiences in terms of a higher purpose. Instead, many of us have reduced our daily activities into series of deadlines for this Dunya (world), limited to meetings, tests, activities, etc. Even though we may be thinking actively on how to do our best in this Dunya, we don't relate it to how it will affect our Akhira (afterlife).

Plato's Allegory of the Cave begins with an image of a group of prisoners who, since childhood, are chained facing a blank wall inside a cave. Throughout their lives, they only see the shadows cast by the objects behind them. The analogy of the cave illustrates how mankind's perception is merely a shadow of true essence. These shadows are a reduced form of reality to the prisoners because they have never been exposed to anything else. Plato suggests that until we make the commitment to see, we will remain ignorant and feel that our beliefs are the truest forms of reality. We need to realize that we can easily be shackled by our experiences of this Dunya, and thus begin to believe that it is our ultimate reality.

Plato's concept of the cave can also be applied to our daily actions and whether or not they are done with the right intentions. Unless we seek knowledge and understand why we must perform our daily activities with the right intentions, we will be no better than the prisoners in Plato's analogy. We will forever believe that the shadows in this Dunya are the only things worth pursuing. In order to bring the relevance of Islam back in our daily lives, we must begin to actively think about our experiences.

This is exactly what Ibrahim (AS) encouraged his people to do when he pointed out the logic in worshipping Allah. Allah (SWT)



describes this event in Surah Al-'An'am (Verse 78) when He states:

"Then when he [Abraham] beheld the sun rising, he said: "This is my Lord. This is the greatest of all." Then, when it went down, he said: "O my people! Most certainly I am quit of those whom you associate with Allah in His Divinity."

This ayah illustrates how Ibrahim (AS) tried to open his people's eyes to a greater reality and the ignorance of their ways. By enlightening our minds, we too can understand how to bring meaning back into our daily activities. All we need to do is connect with our knowledge of Islam. Love grows with understanding, and by continually keeping ourselves in awe of Islam, we can grow a profound love for Allah (SWT).

Sometimes, however, we may be too engulfed in our daily activities to see the beauty of Islam. At times like these, it is necessary to separate ourselves from the Dunya and to refocus as the Prophet (SAW) did while contemplating the issues of his time. He would go to the Cave of Hira to isolate himself both physically and mentally from his daily routine. To enlighten our minds, we must separate ourselves from the shadow-like realities we perceive. We can do this as we pray salah, but also by taking as little as five minutes, free from all the distractions, to ask

ourselves how our work relates to the our greater purpose.

All it takes is the simple act of reflecting upon our activities on a daily basis to renew our intentions and bring the spirit of Islam back into our lives. Allah (SWT) emphasizes the importance of this concept in Surah Al-Mulk (verse 23) when He says:

Say: "He it is Who has brought you into being, and has given you hearing and sight, and has given you hearts to think and understand. How seldom do you give thanks!"

We have been gifted with intelligence and senses, logic and emotions, to build a relationship with our Creator. In order to truly break free from the shadows, we must learn to reevaluate the significance and intentions of our activities, not merely for the dunya, but for the akhira as well.



# Book Review: The Lives of Man

Laith Elkurd  
Al Risalah Writer

Imam ‘Abdallah Ibn ‘Alawi al-Haddad is often regarded as one of the great scholars of Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al Jama’ah. In his book, *The Lives of Man*, Imam Haddad takes readers on the metaphysical journey of the soul from pre-birth to the final abode. The Imam portrays the life of man via five distinct chapters: the life before conception, the Dunya (lower world), the intermediate realm (Barzakh), judgement day, and finally, the life of the hereafter. As readers travel through these different worlds, they reminisce the hadith of the Prophet (SAW): “Be in this world as though you are a stranger, or a wayfarer.” The Prophet (SAW) emphasizes that our time in this particular world, the Dunya, is limited.

Unfortunately, we reside in a world where the embodiment of this hadith is rapidly diminishing. This book serves as

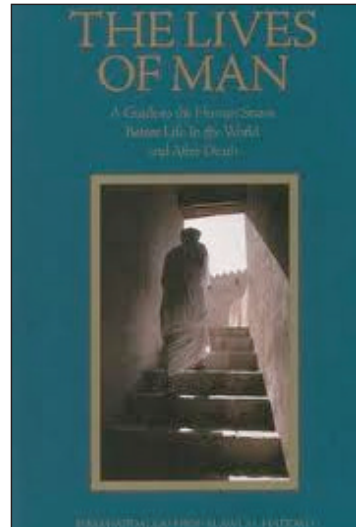
a roadmap explicating the insignificance of this life. The Imam describes the worlds in which our souls have already traversed, though unknowingly, to our current situation offering an advice for life’s journey. A message delivered with simple eloquence and prose of the prophetic traditions.

Abu Bakr (RA) suggested: “Have an earnestness for death, and you will have life. Death is the easiest of all things after it, and the hardest of all things before it.”

Readers must note that Imam Haddad’s *The Lives of Man* is not a casual read; it is an indispensable source of light in these

harsh times. The culmination of this life is certain, but to us the timing is not. Once we are conscious of death and realize that it is not even half the journey, can we adequately prepare for its arrival?

All praise and thanks to Allah. Any errors in this commentary are mine and mine alone. I ask that Allah grant us the utmost benefit from Imam Al-Haddad’s work. May Allah forgive me and forgive us all. May Allah bestow on us ease in death and all that follows. May He grant us entry into His highest and most lofty of dwellings. Praise and blessings be on the Prophet (SAW).



**The Lives of Man by Imam 'Abdallah Ibn 'Alawi al-Haddad; translated by Mustafa al-Badawi**

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# 6 Tips for Loyola Freshmen

Ali Siddiqui

*Al Risalah Editor*

So, you've finally made it to Loyola! You're taking in the lakeside view, getting to know the city, and learning what it means to be a Rambler. Your first semester will set the stage for the rest of your time in college. Although the benefits of being a Loyolan opens up a slew of opportunities and freedoms, it takes some know-how to do it right. In light of that, I've compiled a brief list of the best advice from your upperclassmen and Loyola alumni alike. Here's to the beginning of an unrivaled collegiate experience!

## 1. Take classes that interest you.

College will most likely be the last time you'll ever be able to explore those subjects you've been dreaming to take. Maybe you've always wanted to learn about painting, communications, or even economics—go explore it! You never know what course will open up your eyes and engage your mind like nothing before. You might even end up changing your major altogether; you never know. We all have different passions. Don't follow someone else's. Hassan Khan, a physics major and Loyola alum agrees.

"Don't only pick classes because you have to, [take] some that you want to," Khan suggested. "Whether it's an elective or a core class, choose something you find fun and don't fret about not knowing anything about the subject as there are many introductory courses to get you started."

## 2. Fund for yourself.

One of the most common stereotypes about college students is that they're forever broke and penniless. Don't let that happen to you! If you have to pay money here at Loyola (whose tuition rises each year, unfortunately)

nately) then it's time to find some ways to make money. One of the best ways is to apply for scholarships early. Now, I'm not talking about the scores of "outside" scholarships that you find plastered online (though they should be looked into) rather the "inside" scholarships granted by Loyola. Each year, continuing students at Loyola are given the chance to apply for endowed scholarships which can significantly lower your e-bill come the next semester.

Also, for those who can apply for federal work-study—do so! It's an excellent way to build lifelong skills, a resume, and earn extra money to spend on books, yourself, etc.

## 3. Start looking for research and internship opportunities early.

No matter what subject you're studying, there's always a way to get ahead in that field. For pre-health students, this can mean taking part in research.

"Get [involved] in research as soon as possible, especially if you're pre-med," says Mustafa Azeemuddin a Loyola Alum, "The experience is useful in the long-run."

The process of finding research at Loyola that interests you, talking with professors in that particular field, and getting into a lab can take a while so it's best to start early. Even if you're not in pre-health, there are still internships that you can look into. Whether that be by asking your professors or looking for a position via Ramblerlink, Loyola's online job database, starting now is key.

## 4. Use Loyola's resources!

Each semester, countless Loyola students pay hundreds of dollars from their tuition, for services that they never use or never knew existed. Just to name a few: offices that can help you nab a job (Career Development Center), get through tough classes (The Tutoring Center), learn a new language (the Language Learning Resource Center), or write a paper (The Writing Center).

You should never feel alone here at Loyola. These resources will not only help you during

your college experience, but it will allow you to make the most of what you're paying for.

## 5. Hang out with the right people.

In collecting the many tips used in this article, the most common advice I have received thus far has been finding the right crowd.

"Your friends will determine what you do, so make sure you have a good group [that] keeps everyone on track," says Junior Mohsin Rehman.

You'll likely meet scores of people in your freshman year, but not everyone will be an ideal friend. Some of the best people to meet are upperclassmen that can help guide you.

"Make strong ties with the MSA and seek out upperclassman for advice regarding college life," urged another student. Zacharea Katerji, a former LUC-MSA president shares that sentiment as well: "Hang out with the seniors and learn from them," he says. "Look for people of upright character and make them your companions and mentors."

Like the statement goes, 'You are who your friends are.' And with four years ahead of you, you'll want to make sure you're becoming the best person you can be.

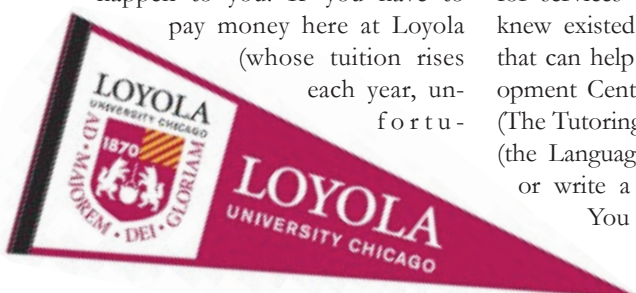
## 6. Take a deep breath and take your time.

We all know some procrastinators and speed-demons in our lives. While that may have worked in high school, college is a different ball game.

You need to work hard and with deliberation," says Nader Ismail, a 2012 graduate.

College will usher in a new chapter in your life and it's high time you break away with your bad habits. Set yourself up for a better life by building good habits now.

With all this advice before you, you may be overwhelmed. You're might wonder, "How do I begin?" Perhaps Samar Khan, a recent biophysics graduate said it best: "Take a deep breath... college is just the beginning of your journey. Don't stress too much. Trust Allah, say Bismillah, and begin."



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# What's Happening?

Professor Zubair Nisanci's Qur'an Study; Thursday at 7:30 pm in Mundelein 621 (tentative location)

Showing of the Interrupters, Followed by Session with Ms. Ameena Matthews on October 11 from 6-9p.m. in LSB 142.

Second Blood Drive of the Year is October 15, 11-6 pm and October 16, 11-5pm in Bremner Lounge (CFSU)

Loyola MSA hosts an Orphan Sponsorship Drive throughout the entire academic year

Professor Mozaffar's Weekly Monday classes in Mundelein 520 from 6-9 pm

S.H.A.M.S. "Walk to Cure Diabetes" is on Sunday, October 14 from 8:30-11:30 a.m. at the Community Park of Lisle (1825 Short Street Lisle, IL).

SJP's event "The Time is Now: Divesting from the Israeli Occupation" is on Oct. 11 at 7:00 in Galvin Auditorium

SJP's event "Palestine and Israel: Modes of International and Domestic PR" with Max Blumenthal and Ali Abunimah is on Oct. 18 at 7:00 in Galvin Auditorium

Articles contained in Al Risalah do not represent views of the publication or of LUC MSA. Al Risalah is a non-biased medium through which students and other writers can express their individual beliefs.

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