

## *Full Length Paper*

# **CORONAVIRUS: MUSINGS OF AN IMAM**

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**The paper examines Covid-19 from the perspective of an imam in relation to Islamic teachings and media representation explaining that moslems and non-moslems are pre-disposed to succumb to fear and falsehood in line with pre-end-times Qur'anic prophecies that encapsulate the Islamic eschatology.**

**In contour and thrusts, the paper is journalistic weaving interpretation of Qur'anic verses blended in a posit recursive narration of media-obsessive treatment of the Coronavirus as distinct from other historical pandemics.**

**Keywords:** Covid-19; pandemics; prophecies; Islamic eschatology; conspiracy theories; media obsession; paranoia; social contract

## INTRODUCTION

From the start of the year, the “new coronavirus”, subsequently named Covid-19, dominated not only the media but also the lives of people across the globe. What began as the announcement of a medical emergency and likely pandemic, emanating from Wuhan in China, soon took on greater dimensions. The media incessantly talked about nothing else and became obsessed with death figures; all other news disappeared, neither war nor terrorism seemed to exist anymore in the Covid world. Since it all began with a virus, let’s first take a closer look at the medical aspects, whilst being reminded that scares about a global pandemic are not a new phenomenon, although the response has been hugely different. In 2002 there was the original SARS.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2002%E2%80%932004\\_SARS\\_outbreak](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2002%E2%80%932004_SARS_outbreak); accessed 06/06/2020); in 2007 “bird flu” (H5N1) threatened to overtake the world ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avian\\_influenza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avian_influenza); accessed 06/06/2020); in 2017 it made a reappearance as H7N9. In 2009 there was the “swine flu” (H1N1) pandemic ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009\\_swine\\_flu\\_pandemic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_swine_flu_pandemic); accessed 06/06/2020). Finally, in 2019 we were faced with Covid-19. All started out from China.

## BACKGROUND TO THE NATURE OF COVID-19

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether the virus was naturally occurring or man-made; (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52496098>; accessed 26/05/2020) (<https://www.livescience.com/coronavirus-not-human-made-in-lab.html>; accessed 26/05/2020) in the latter case whether it was accidentally released from a lab in Wuhan or intentionally.

President Trump made a point of accusing China of allowing the virus to enter the public domain, calling it the Chinese virus, thereby giving rise to expressions of anti-Asian racism in the United States (<https://theconversation.com/anti-asian-racism-during-coronavirus-how-the-language-of-disease-produces-hate-and-violence-134496>; accessed 26/05/2020).

(<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/17/us-government-should-better-combat-anti-asian-racism>; accessed 26/05/2020).

Others then pointed out that the lab in Wuhan both received American funding and that, most likely, the virus had been introduced to the lab by Americans. To this end papers were cited that Americans had earlier patented such a virus (<https://factcheck.afp.com/false-claims-patents-fuel-novel-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-online>; accessed 26/05/2020) and that they had pre-knowledge of its release, as well as that American soldiers were implicated during a visit to China during a sports

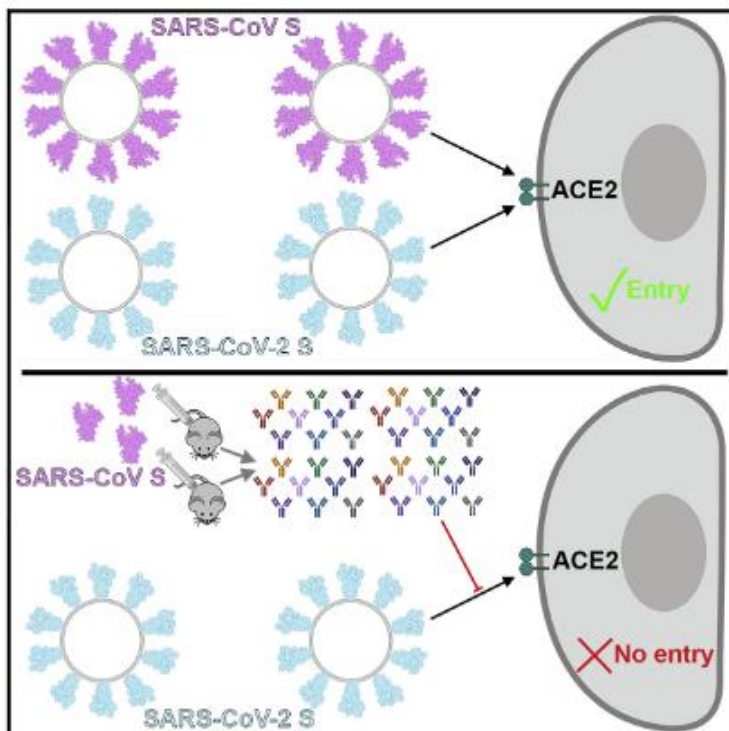
competition (<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/03/12/chinese-official-says-us-army-may-have-brought-epidemic-wuhan.html>; accessed 25/05/2020).  
(<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8291755/Did-European-athletes-catch-coronavirus-competing-World-Military-Games-Wuhan-OCTOBER.html>; accessed 25/05/2020).

More on the background of the virus' origin may well be revealed when the dust settles, if it ever does, since there is also talk of a "second wave"  
(<https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-when-will-the-second-wave-of-infections-hit/a-53435135>; accessed 26/05/2020).

Once the virus had been "discovered", it took on a dynamics of its own as a result of the relentless efforts of the World Health Organisation (largely privately funded with Bill Gates' foundation supporting about 12% of the budget and thus holding a major interest (<https://open.who.int/2018-19/contributors/contributor>; accessed 25/05/2020) who, with their prediction of unprecedented rates of infection and deaths, sent everybody into paranoia. Eventually, some, suitably qualified yet mostly ignored, pointed out that the models (<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01003-6>; accessed 06/06/2020) used in simulating the spread and effect of the virus did not hold up to scrutiny.  
(<https://www.heritage.org/public-health/commentary/failures-influential-covid-19-model-used-justify-lockdowns>; accessed 25/05/2020)  
(<https://live.healthday.com/covid-19-prediction-models-flawed-2645660116.html>; accessed 25/05/2020)  
(<https://www.statnews.com/2020/04/17/influential-covid-19-model-uses-flawed-methods-shouldnt-guide-policies-critics-say/>; accessed 25/05/2020)  
(<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/489962-what-if-the-sky-is-falling-coronavirus-models-are-simply-wrong>; accessed 25/05/2020).

A lot of fuss was subsequently made about the need for testing  
(<https://www.heart.org/en/news/2020/04/02/covid-19-science-why-testing-is-so-important>; accessed 26/05/2020) in order to establish whether the virus was indeed as dangerous and deadly as claimed or no worse than the seasonal flu. Here, voices were raised that the testing in turn was ineffective, because it picked up a lot of "noise", since a purified sample of the virus itself had never been isolated.  
(<https://www.sciencemediacentre.org/expert-comment-on-different-types-of-testing-for-covid-19/>; accessed 25/05/2020). Thus, many other pathogens could result in a positive test outcome. The president of Tanzania even had fruit and animals tested for the virus and some results came back positive. (<https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/president-queries-tanzania-coronavirus-kits-after-goat-test>; accessed 25/05/2020).

The media, who thrived on the stories of death and destruction were not concerned with such critical voices and continued bombarding readers, listeners and viewers with a scenario of doom and gloom.



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### In Brief

SARS-CoV-2, a newly emerged pathogen spreading worldwide, binds with high affinity to human ACE2 and uses it as an entry receptor to invade target cells. Cryo-EM structures of the SARS-CoV-2 spike glycoprotein in two distinct conformations, along with inhibition of spike-mediated entry by SARS-CoV polyclonal antibodies, provide a blueprint for the design of vaccines and therapeutics.

Figures 1 & 2

<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0092867420302622?token=8178D1FF3D94EF6370C3AA113740F4F8FBC644D4EAAD8DDC389757E9A61962AEC1FE04C5543856D9F804C94CF384E8D0>

## WIDESPREAD PANIC

This was not the first time that there had been a pandemic, but it was the first one with round the clock live television coverage, creating widespread panic. To the ordinary viewer, seeing hundreds, even thousands of deaths quoted, this virus appeared to have the potential to wipe out humanity. To those reading statistics, it was soon clear that the mortality rate was in line with other viruses, such as the flu, and more than modest in comparison to other “killer diseases”, for example cancer. People die daily, yet the world population is still increasing at twice the rate of deaths, and in a year-on-year comparison of fatalities, this novel virus hardly made a dent in the overall figures. (<https://flyingimam.blogspot.com/2020/04/the-crown-has-no-clothes.html>; accessed 25/05/2020) (<https://www.worldometers.info/>; accessed 25/05/2020).

In other words, whilst there were, no doubt, cases of deaths from the virus, they vanished into insignificance compared to the numbers of death from other causes. Added to that was the question of how deaths were attributed to the virus, since in many countries not only people who died from the virus as a direct cause had this entered on their death certificate, but also those for whom the virus was only a contributory cause to an already existing underlying condition. When counting all deaths with the virus, instead of only deaths from the virus, the difference was highly significant statistically, but even then, it was nothing of a dimension which could have justified the political measures which were taken as a result. Zaria Gorvett argues in a BBC article that “whilst we are all worrying about the coronavirus, most fatalities could be collateral damage”. (<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200528-why-most-covid-19-deaths-wont-be-from-the-virus>; accessed 30/06/2020).

This author’s most recent experience of hospitalisation has been one where he was placed on a quarantine ward with VIP care but as soon as his Covid test results came out as negative was rushed off to the general ward and dumped in an outside corridor. It seems that these days, everything is being looked at through Covid19-coloured spectacles.

## STATE OF EMERGENCY

Around the world, governments responded by declaring a state of emergency and putting in place restrictions which, at least temporarily, in many cases however long-term, cancelled out the traditionally enjoyed human rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of travel. The marginalisation and, in some cases, censoring of critical voices, also limited the right to freedom of speech. Whole populations were put under house arrest during a so-called “lockdown”, were told to self-isolate and “stay at home” and were fined if they

violated those conditions. Linda Geddes makes the case that this isolation in turn might seriously affect people's immune system in the future.

(<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200521-can-staying-inside-weaken-the-immune-system>; accessed 30/06/2020).

Travel was curtailed, and borders were closed. Shops were forced to close their doors unless they sold what governments considered to be essential items, which included food, but not, for example, clothing.

### **FACE MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING**

When those restrictions were partially lifted, new measures took their place, such as the compulsory wearing of facemasks and "social distancing" in public places. This led to the bizarre situation that after the lifting of the state of emergency in a given country, the situation looked scarier than before, with people covering their faces and looking like aliens who were told to "shut up and keep to yourself". Ironically, countries like France, which had only a couple of years earlier passed a law prohibiting people from covering their faces in public, such as Muslim women who chose to wear the "niqab" or youths wearing "hoodies" and "bandanas", now passed laws to make such attire compulsory.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_ban\\_on\\_face\\_covering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_ban_on_face_covering); accessed 07/06/2020).

The political measures had economic consequences, the damage of which dwarfed the direct effects of the virus, real or imagined. Small and medium-sized companies, including budget airlines, for example, went out of business, the number of unemployed soared world-wide. To keep people at home, money was pumped into the economy in industrialised countries, further increasing the already high levels of debt, whereas in poorer countries, daily labourers and wage earners were pushed to the brink of starvation. There is talk of a deep and lasting economic depression as a result of the virus (<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52752172>; accessed 25/05/2020), although it would be more truthful to attribute the harm not to the virus but to the over-reaction to it by the world's elected governments who chose to listen to non-elected global bodies to the detriment of their own populations.

### **CANCELLATION OF RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

A by-product of the ban on public gatherings was the cancellation of all religious services. Public celebrations of Easter, Passover and Ramadan/Eid-ul-Fitr were cancelled. Churches, synagogues, mosques and temples were closed. Whilst some aspects of religious practice remain possible at an individual level, all religions rely on "community".



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For the first time in history the Kaabah in Mecca was closed to worshippers and the “tawaf”, its circumambulation, as good as stopped completely.

(<https://flyingimam.blogspot.com/2020/04/the-crown-has-no-clothes.html>; accessed 26/05/2020).

We have now entered a phase where at least some people have become more and more critical of how the crisis had been handled, and large demonstrations against draconian lockdown measures took place (<https://www.vox.com/2020/5/20/21263919/anti-lockdown-protests-coronavirus-germany-brazil-uk-chile>; accessed 25/05/2020), in some cases put down heavy-handedly by police (mostly unreported, Piers Corbyn, brother of the former UK opposition leader, was amongst those arrested) (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/16/piers-corbyn-among-those-held-in-coronavirus-lockdown-protests>; accessed 25/05/2020), who themselves did not see the need to wear facemasks or keep a distance from each other or the public, raising claims of double standards. The same applies to politicians who were slow to adopt the measures they had imposed on others.

Modern forms of government are based on the so-called social contract ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_contract](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_contract); accessed 25/05/2020) in which individuals surrender some of their freedoms in return for protection by the state. Now it seems, the state is intent on taking all of their freedoms in return for protecting itself against them or to protect them against themselves. There is talk of permanent travel restrictions, health passports, mandatory vaccines and more. This ongoing erosion of liberties has not gone unnoticed (<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-8281007/Former-Supreme-Court-judge-LORD-SUMPTION-gives-withering-critique-Governments-lockdown.html>; accessed 25/05/2020). If not reversed, it will easily represent the slippery slope into fascism. As the freedoms removed are gradually given back, albeit with their extent reduced, people are grateful for a lessening of restrictions without realising that more of their rights have been surrendered. Thus, at least being able to venture outside wearing a mask seems a great improvement on having to stay at home yet is a serious interference with the concept of freedom of movement.

### **CONSPIRACY THEORIES**

As in any other field, “conspiracy theories” abound, but many are more than mere theories. The link between Covid-19 and 5G technology has been debunked, the very real harm emanating from microwave radiation has not.

(<https://www.jrseco.com/european-union-5g-appeal-scientists-warn-of-potential-serious-health-effects-of-5g/>; accessed 25/05/2020). It is no secret that the economy was heading for another cyclical decline and recession or depression any time soon; this virus

has been convenient to shift blame and ensure that medical scientists and politicians, rather than bankers, will be blamed for the fall-out, unlike in 2008. It is still uncertain how it will all play out, whether there will be large-scale unrest and whether already unpopular “democratic” governments will fall, but again, this would only speed up to usher in the New World Order, a one-world government those who hold the purse strings have long been dreaming of and working to impose.

### ISLAMIC ESCHATOLOGY AND QUR’ANIC TEACHINGS

For Muslims, the time of the Mahdi may be nearer than they previously thought (<https://flyingimam.blogspot.com/2020/05/foam-of-sea.html>; accessed 25/05/2020).

Abu Hurairah reported that whilst the prophet, Allah blessed him and granted him peace, was talking, a Bedouin came to him and asked: *"When will the hour come to pass?" He replied: "Wait for the hour when **trust will be destroyed.**" He asked, how it would be destroyed, and he said: "Wait for the hour **when the rule will be entrusted to those who don't deserve it.**"* (Bukhari).

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud narrated that the prophet Muhammad, peace be with him, said: *"If only one day of this world remained, Allah would lengthen that day till He raised up in it a man who belongs to my family, whose name is like my name and whose father's name is like my father's name, who will fill the earth with equity and justice as it has been filled with oppression and tyranny".* (Abu Daud)

This belief in the Mahdi, reuniting Muslims after harsh tribulations during the end time or the age of the Dajjal, the false Messiah or Anti-Christ, is an essential part of Islamic eschatology. Most of it is based on hadith literature, many of them with a *mutawatir isnad*, meaning they have been reported by so many of the companions of the prophet Muhammad that there can be no doubt about their veracity.

For example, Thauban reported that the messenger of Allah said: "It is near that the nations will call one another against you just as the eaters call one another to their dishes." Somebody asked: "Is this because we will be few in numbers that day?" He said: "Nay, but that day you shall be numerous, but you will be like the foam of the sea, and Allah will take the fear of you away from your enemies and will place weakness into your hearts." Somebody asked: "What is this weakness?" He said: "The love of the world and the dislike of death." (Abu Daud)

There can be little doubt that one can interpret that the prophet, peace be with him, was talking about our life in the present.



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In verse 6 of Surah al-Hujurat, Allah admonishes us: “Oh you believers, if a sinner comes to you with information, verify it before you afflict people in ignorance and then regret what you have done.” (Bleher, S. M. (tr.) (2018); *The Meaning of the Wise Qur’an*; Birmingham: Islamic Dawah Centre International.

However, as usual, we, the people, did not pay heed. We placed our trust in the sinners and took their word for the truth without further verification. We closed churches, mosques, even the Kaabah, cancelled Friday prayers and Tarawih, and contemplated cancelling Hajj, because we were told that we were in grave danger and might die. The love of the world and dislike of death made us abandon our religion wholesale. Whereas this world is temporary, and death is certain, lockdown or not, as the Qur’an tells us in verse 78 of Surah An-Nisa’: “Wherever you are death will reach you even if you were in fortified towers...” (Ibid)

### CONCLUSION

According to official statistics 480 people have died with (not directly from) Covid-19 in the Makkah region (<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=coronavirus+deaths+makkah>; accessed 06/06/2020) (676 in the whole of Saudi Arabia) in just under half a year (<https://www.coronatracker.com/country/saudi-arabia/>; accessed 06/06/2020). That’s about 20 per week. During every Hajj more than 1000 people die of heat exhaustion or heat stroke (in less than a week!) (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2452247316000200>; accessed 06/06/2020), so based on those figures we should never have allowed Hajj in the first place, for such a large gathering in such a hot country is statistically many times more dangerous than the new Corona virus.

What has happened to our scholars? What has happened to our leaders? It has become evident that they are no different from the secular scientific advisers and political leaders and peddle the same untruths about the unprecedented dangers from a virus hyped up by media propoganda by the very people whose news or information we were meant to verify, knowing from their track record that they are immoral and sinful. Our scholars and leaders can no longer be trusted to guide us.

In verse 57 of Surah Hud, Allah has one of his prophets warn: “Then if you turn away, then I have already conveyed what I was sent to you with, and my Lord will replace you with another people and you will not harm Him at all, for my Lord is keeper of everything.” (The Meaning of the Wise Qur’an, op cit.) And in verse 38 of Surah Muhammad: “...and if you turn away [,] He will replace you with a different people who will not be like you.” (Ibid)

We have experienced a Ramadan like no other in Muslim history where our mosques and the Kaabah have been placed in isolation. We are just over two months away from Hajj season. If the Muslims of today do not reclaim their heritage and God-given rights and over-rule those who have destroyed their trust, may Allah hasten His promise and raise amongst us people who will restore justice.

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### Profile

*Prof. Dr. Sahib Mustaqim Bleher is a founder member of the Islamic Party of Britain and served as its general secretary and education spokesman as well as editor of the party magazine Common Sense. He is a professor of applied linguistics and translation and works as a commercial translator and interpreter through his own translation company in the UK. He is a member of Chartered Institute of Linguists and of the Chartered Institute of Journalists in the UK.*

*Born in 1959 in Heidelberg, Germany, he worked as a journalist before turning to translation and publishing. He has translated several titles of Islamic Literature from Arabic to German and authored several books in English through his own small publishing enterprise in the UK where he also served many years as a prison imam.*

*Sahib Mustaqim Bleher is known for his dynamic lectures at universities and other events throughout the UK and abroad, as well as numerous pamphlets, dealing with topics on education, Islamic economics, politics, Muslim strategy and other issues of contemporary interest. He is a regular participant on various radio and television shows.*

*Aviation [is] amongst [his] hobbies. He holds a private pilot's licence with instrument rating. He is also a 5th Kyu in Kyokoshinkai Karate and is currently studying Tai Chi Chuan. He is married, has five grown-up children and [eleven] grandchildren.*

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