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International conference on Islam opens

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16 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

International conference on Islam opens

Prominent Islamic leaders are standing up for their religion, nations and values at an international conference on Islam, being held in the Austrian capital Vienna. Center of the discussions so far has been the hijacking of the religion of Islam by fundamentalists. On Tuesday, the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said Islam is being “distorted” by terrorist groups, who “trampled on the rights” of ordinary Muslims. In an impassioned and hard-hitting speech, he lamented the current devastation and carnage in his country, where he said al-Qaeda is inflicting enormous suffering. He implored Islamic leaders from all sects to spread the message from the Koran that “he who kills the innocent will go to hell”. He also lambasted as “blind deceit” the argument that paradise awaited suicide bombers.

Mr. Talabani also vehemently challenged Europe’s opposition to the US-led occupation of Iraq. He said war was the only way to end the brutalities of Saddam Hussein’s regime. He warned of dire consequences worldwide if terrorists defeated freedom in Iraq. Afghanistan’s leader Hamid Karzai supported him by reminding people of the horrors Saddam Hussein had institutionalized to maintain his vice-like grip on Iraq, which he said had “become hell”. He expressed abhorrence that for the first time, an autocratic regime had “waged a quiet war” by using chemical and biological weapons against its own people. Nevertheless, Mr. Talabani was optimistic about the future of Iraq, not least because of its fledgling constitution, which he says “is unique in the Arab world.”

WARM-UPS

1. MY RELIGION: Chat to your partners about your religion (or lack of one). Why do you stick to that religion? Do you think it is better than other religions? Do you like other religions? Would you consider changing to another religion? Does religion do more good than harm in the world?

2. ISLAMIC INVENTIONS: Where would we be without the following inventions, all invented by Muslims?

- The windmill
- International banking
- The jury system
- The telescope
- Algebra
- The watch
- Soap
- Glass
- The compass
- The numbers 0 to 9

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Islamic leaders / religion / values / Vienna / hijacks / Muslims / the Koran / Iraq / Hamid Karzai / hell / biological weapons / optimism / constitutions

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ISLAM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "Islam". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. SECTS: News reports are full of references to different sects of Islam. What do you know about these sects? Talk to other students and find out what you know about each sect and the differences between them:

Sunni Shiite Druze Alawi Ismaili Kurds Sufi Wahhabi Ahmadiyyah Kharijis

6. ISLAMIC COUNTRIES: There are 1.3 billion Muslims in the world. The Organization of the Islamic Conference has 57 members. Talk in pairs / groups about what you know about the following members:

- Afghanistan
- Egypt
- Lebanon
- Senegal
- Albania
- Indonesia
- Maldives
- Saudi Arabia
- Cameroon
- Jordan
- Palestine
- Turkey

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Islamic leaders are congregating for a conference in Australia. T / F
- b. Discussions have centered on how to reduce airplane hijackings. T / F
- c. Iraq's president said al-Qaeda is inflicting enormous suffering in Iraq. T / F
- d. The Koran says, "he who kills the innocent will go to hell". T / F
- e. Iraq's president vehemently opposes the US-led occupation. T / F
- f. Afghanistan's present strongly disagreed with Iraq's president. T / F
- g. Afghanistan's president said Iraq was "hell" under Saddam Hussein. T / F
- h. Iraq's constitution is unique in the Arab world. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| a. prominent | hatred |
| b. trampled on | deplored |
| c. lamented | calamitous |
| d. implored | fraud |
| e. deceit | violated |
| f. vehemently | tyrannical |
| g. dire | eminent |
| h. abhorrence | new |
| i. autocratic | beseached |
| j. fledgling | passionately |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| a. Islamic leaders are standing | rights of ordinary Muslims |
| b. Center of the discussions | a quiet war |
| c. trampled on the | consequences worldwide |
| d. he lamented the current devastation | so far... |
| e. he who kills the innocent | up for their religion |
| f. vehemently challenged | grip on Iraq |
| g. He warned of dire | and carnage in his county |
| h. maintain his vice-like | abhorrence that... |
| i. He expressed | Europe's opposition |
| j. waged | will go to hell |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHOOPS: Five of the ten words in bold in each paragraph are mistakes. With your partner(s), identify them and agree on replacement words.

International conference on Islam opens

Prominent Islamic leaders are standing **down** for their religion, nations and values at an international conference on Islam, being **hold** in the Austrian capital Vienna. Center of the discussions so **far** has been the hijacking of the religion of Islam by fundamentalists. On Tuesday, the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said Islam is being “distorted” by terrorist groups, who “**trampled** on the **rights**” of ordinary Muslims. In an impassioned and hard-hitting speech, he lamented the **currant** devastation and carnage in his county, where he said al-Qaeda is inflicting **minimal** suffering. He implored Islamic leaders from all sects to **spread** the message from the Koran that “he who kills the innocent will go to hell”. He also lambasted as “**deaf** deceit” the argument that **paradise** awaited suicide bombers.

Mr. Talabani also **vehemently** challenged Europe’s opposition to the US-led occupation of Iraq. He said war was the only way to **extend** the brutalities of Saddam Hussein’s regime. He warned of **dire** consequences worldwide if terrorists defeated freedom in Iraq. Afghanistan’s leader Hamid Karzai supported him by **reprimanding** people of the **horrors** Saddam Hussein had institutionalized to maintain his **slice**-like grip on Iraq, which he said had “become **hell**”. He expressed abhorrence that for the first time, an autocratic regime had “**waged** a quiet war” by using chemical and biological weapons against its own people. Nevertheless, Mr. Talabani was optimistic about the future of Iraq, not **most** because of its fledgling constitution, which he says “is **common** in the Arab world.”

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

International conference on Islam opens

Prominent Islamic leaders are _____ their religion, nations and values at an international conference on Islam, being held in the Austrian capital Vienna. Center of the discussions so far has been _____ the religion of Islam by fundamentalists. On Tuesday, the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said Islam is being “distorted” by terrorist groups, who “_____ on the rights” of ordinary Muslims. In an impassioned and hard-hitting speech, he lamented the current devastation and _____ in his county, where he said al-Qaeda is _____ enormous suffering. He implored Islamic leaders from all sects to spread the message from the Koran that “he who kills the innocent will go to hell”. He also _____ as “blind deceit” the argument that paradise awaited suicide bombers.

Mr. Talabani also _____ challenged Europe’s opposition to the US-led occupation of Iraq. He said war was the only way to end the brutalities of Saddam Hussein’s regime. He warned of _____ consequences worldwide if terrorists defeated freedom in Iraq. Afghanistan’s leader Hamid Karzai supported him by reminding people of the horrors Saddam Hussein had institutionalized to maintain his _____ grip on Iraq, which he said had “become hell”. He expressed _____ that for the first time, an autocratic regime had “_____ a quiet war” by using chemical and biological weapons against its own people. Nevertheless, Mr. Talabani was optimistic about the future of Iraq, not least because of its _____ constitution, which he says “is unique in the Arab world.”

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'Islamic' and 'leader'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHOOPS: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "ISLAM" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Islam.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| • standing | • challenged |
| • hijacking | • brutalities |
| • distorted | • dire |
| • lamented | • vice |
| • sects | • waged |
| • blind | • unique |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think are the main issues to be discussed at the conference?
- c. What do you think the conference will achieve?
- d. What significance does the attendance of the presidents of Iraq and Afghanistan have?
- e. What do you think al-Qaeda thinks of the leaders of Iraq and Afghanistan?
- f. If Iraq's president wants US troops to stay in Iraq, shouldn't European countries respect that?
- g. Do you think the Sunnis and Shias can leave peacefully, side by side?
- h. What do Western nations need to do to heal wounds with Muslim nations and people?
- i. What questions would you like to ask Iraq's president?
- j. What do you think his answers would be?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think Islam is demonized in the Western press?
- d. Do you think terrorists have "hijacked" Islam?
- e. What do you know about the history of conflict between the Christian and Muslim worlds?
- f. Would the world be safer if Saddam Hussein were still in power?
- g. Are you optimistic about the future of Iraq?
- h. Do you think other countries in the Middle East will change?
- i. What other things are unique to the Arab world?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the conference on Islam in Vienna. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS: Make a poster outlining the history between Muslims and Christians. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

4. PREDICTIONS: Make a list of predictions about the future of the Middle East and the war on terror. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Discuss which of your predictions are most likely to come true.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. prominent	eminent
b. trampled on	violated
c. lamented	deplored
d. implored	beseached
e. deceit	fraud
f. vehemently	passionately
g. dire	calamitous
h. abhorrence	hatred
i. autocratic	tyrannical
j. fledgling	new

PHRASE MATCH:

a. Islamic leaders are standing	up for their religion
b. Center of the discussions	so far...
c. trampled on the	rights of ordinary Muslims
d. he lamented the current devastation	and carnage in his county
e. he who kills the innocent	will go to hell
f. vehemently challenged	Europe's opposition
g. He warned of dire	consequences worldwide
h. maintain his vice-like	grip on Iraq
i. He expressed	abhorrence that...
j. waged	a quiet war

WHOOOPS:

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