



HUSSAIN

REVIVING HOPE IN HUMANITY

whoishussain.org

HUSSAIN: REVIVING HOPE IN HUMANITY

This short booklet aims to provide you with more information about Hussain; the motivation behind his stand against a tyrant and how we, today, can emulate his legacy and selflessly strive towards a fairer and more equal society.

WHAT WAS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND HUSSAIN'S REVOLUTION?

It's an interesting question: what drives you? What makes you get out of bed in the morning? For some it may be money or a desire to accumulate social status but for most it's probably family, friends and the relationships we cultivate throughout our lifetimes. Virtually none of us would say 'serving humanity'.

Yet Hussain gave up *everything* he had – from material comforts like his home, wealth and status in society, to things far more important, like his friends and family, and ultimately his life.

Hussain had a privileged position in society. He lived in Medina, a city named after his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad, who had taken a cluster of desert-dwelling tribes, constantly at war with one another, and united them under the banner of Islam into a modern and more equal society. His father had been the fourth Caliph of the Muslim empire. He himself was known as a man of knowledge and generosity, who spent his days teaching and his nights feeding the poor and hungry.

The Caliph of the time (680 AD), Yazid, was a corrupt and brutal tyrant, who wanted to claim legitimacy for his illegitimate rule. When he demanded Hussain's allegiance, it would have been easy for Hussain to simply pledge his loyalty and be left alone to lead his life of worship and teaching. In all probability, he would have most likely been rewarded handsomely.

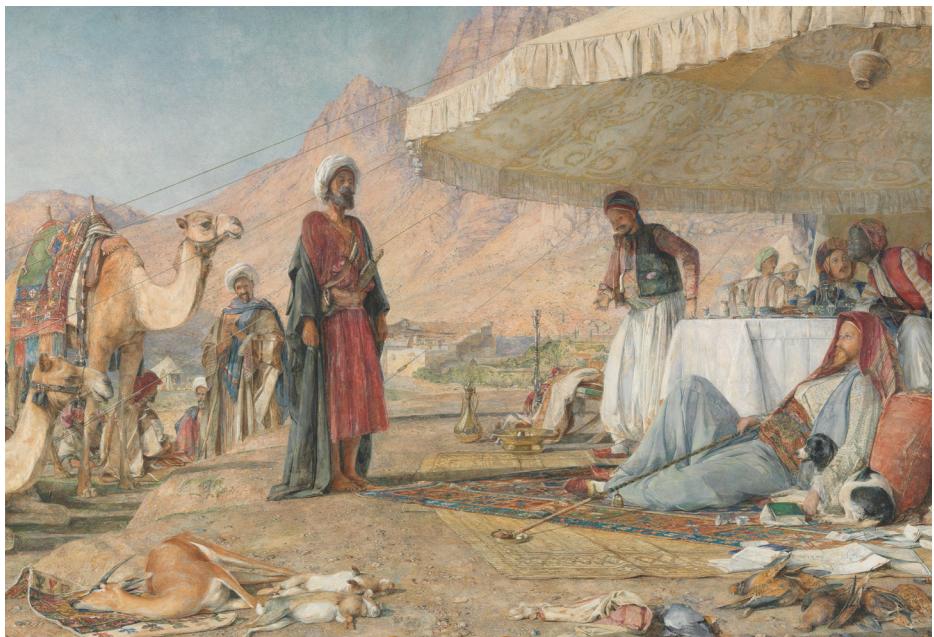
In this situation, what would you or I do? Many of us would want to stay out of the dangerous world of politics, agree to pay a superficial pledge of loyalty and go back to our normal lives, content in the knowledge that a few words of lip service means nothing. After all, we'd simply be doing what was right to protect our lives – as well as our families'.

Yet Hussain refused. Even when the stark choice of allegiance or death was put to him, he did not waver from his choice, and famously proclaimed: **“A man like me could never give allegiance to a man like him.”**

This statement is crucial to understanding the driving force behind Hussain's sacrifice and its relevance to us today. By all accounts, Hussain was a modest and humble man, so we know the statement wasn't rooted in any kind of arrogance.

In fact, what Hussain was saying is that if good people give in to the powers of evil – even if only by paying lip service – then they can no longer claim to be good. The line between evil, and those that enable evil by either tacitly giving in or staying silent, becomes blurred, and the world is a worse place for it. Do we not witness the extent of this today?

Hussain himself said: **“I did not rise up for... wickedness, amusement, corruption or oppression, but I rose to reform the community of my grandfather [the Prophet Muhammad].”**



UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF HUSSAIN'S REVOLUTION

Whilst this booklet does not seek to explore Prophet Muhammad's life, it is important to understand the context of the world in which Hussain, Muhammad's grandson, resided.

Muhammad had been born into a backwards society, set up to serve only the interests of the wealthy men who ran it. Women had no rights and were essentially considered property. Not only could they not inherit, but they would be inherited themselves: a son would inherit his father's wives on his death. The Arabs of the time saw daughters as a stain on their family's reputation and would bury their infant girls alive. They were a tribal people,

who spent much of their time fighting to resolve petty disputes. Racism was entrenched in society, and the few foreigners present were normally either second-class citizens or slaves. Nepotism was commonplace and positions of leadership were inherited – regardless of character or suitability.

Muhammad relentlessly worked to rid society of these pagan and backward customs. He significantly advanced women's rights and advocated in favour of racial equality. Indeed, many of the first converts to Islam were women, slaves and foreigners, who were drawn to its message of inclusiveness and equality. He united the Arabs under the banner of Islam and signed peace treaties between tribes as well as with the Jews, Christians and pagans of surrounding areas.

Muhammad also reformed an economic system which advanced only the interests of the rich. He first encouraged those who were owed high interest loans to "give up outstanding interest if [they were] truly believers" (Quran 2:278). In the same way Jesus had overturned the tables of the money-changers centuries earlier, Muhammad attempted to reshape people's attitudes to money: "...God has made interest fruitless and charity fruitful" (Quran 2:276).

Muhammad himself, despite being head of a state by the time of his death, lived a life of simplicity. Rather than occupying a palace, lived in a humble house annexed to the mosque. He ran the state's affairs from this mosque, where anyone – rich or poor, man or woman, old or young, Muslim or not – could approach

him with their issues. Indeed, it is said visiting dignitaries were often shocked when meeting him because he abstained from the usual fineries to which they were accustomed.

In the years following Muhammad's death, society regressed. Many of the old flaws had reappeared and the burgeoning Muslim empire had become dynastic, passed down from father to son, with the Caliph living lives of luxury in opulent palaces. Wealth became concentrated in the hands of a few, whilst many went hungry. The incumbent Caliph, Yazid, was ill-suited to rule but had been installed by his father before his death, in violation of a treaty signed by Hussain's brother.

Historians narrate that for months, from the initial demand, until the very day of the battle of Karbala, the choice remained open to Hussain to give his allegiance and go home safely. The Caliph's forces did not want to deal with the political fallout of killing a man so popular and well-regarded.

Hussain knew that he has no realistic chance of victory. Yet he preferred to stand up for what he believed in, the values of his grandfather – equality, justice and morality – even if it involved giving up everything he had, including his life. In fact, historians narrate that even on the Day of Ashura (when the Battle of Karbala took place), Hussain prayed for the army of the 30,000 against him, for he knew they were ignorant and had been enticed to stand against him with money, security and promises of influential positions. But neither Yazid, nor his forces, showed any mercy towards Hussain, his companions or his family.



WHY IS HUSSAIN'S REVOLUTION RELEVANT 'TIL TODAY?

Today, thanks to presence of the internet, we are kept abreast of news all over the world. We live in an era of hyper-information and are connected to the far corners of the globe with just a few taps and swipes on our hand-held devices. We can no longer claim ignorance of the suffering of others.

We may live comfortable lives, with fairly secure jobs, in places where we do not have to fear for the well-being of our loved ones. But we all know there are millions around the world who don't have the same luxuries, through no fault of their own. It is *this* paradox that makes Hussain's revolution relevant until today.

In today's world of gross inequality and social injustices, just like Hussain, we have two choices to make; either take the easy road of silence or the difficult road of rejecting the status quo.

We live in a world where inequality is more obvious than ever before. All over the world, this unfairness persists. Even in the world's richest countries, the OECD says **the average income of the richest 10% is about nine times that of the poorest 10%** (and rising). In those sprawling metropolises where companies post record profits, ensuring the wealth of a few, thousands of families struggle to stay afloat in poorly-paid jobs. The odds stacked against them, leaving them helpless and hopeless. Oxfam has reported that **the world's eight richest people controlled the same amount of wealth as the poorest 3.6 billion**.

We live in a world where refugees trek across African deserts or the Mediterranean Ocean risking their lives. They do this in order to escape wars orchestrated by world powers that had little to do with them. The UNHCR estimates that **every minute twenty people are forcibly displaced from their homes**, joining a staggering 66 million already upheaved.

This is *not* an argument for a revolution from the left, or some socialist resurrection. This is a matter of social justice and reviving humanity in today's fractured world.

Hussain's revolution was not just against the unjust ruler of his time and place: it was a universal declaration against immorality, injustice and corruption across all ages and all spaces.

It is comparable to how Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X didn't just protest against racism in the USA and Mandela didn't just rail against South African apartheid. Despite their difference in tactics, these inspirational figures all stood for something greater than themselves - just like Hussain 1400 years before.

It is for this reason Hussain's legacy has stood the test of time and is recognised by millions around the world. The annual memory of his legacy on the anniversary of Ashura Day, reminds people of all backgrounds that they too have a similar choice to make as Hussain did. **To remain silent to the injustices of our time - or speak up, take a stand and make a real difference.**



HOW CAN YOU MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD?

We can each do a little every day to make sure that the world is a better place for our being in it. We can be inspired by the famous maxim: "**All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.**" The *least* we can do is to ensure that we don't fall under the category of doing nothing.

The good news is that we are slowly starting to become more aware of these issues. Thanks in large part to advances in technology and the advent of social media, we are now at least aware of human rights abuses across the world in a way previous generations were not. We know the inequalities that exist where we live and elsewhere.

Everyone's capabilities are different. For some, fighting injustice and helping others may mean donating to a charity. Some may prefer to spend their time and effort to help organise or participate in events that will improve the lives of others in some small way (e.g. feeding the homeless). Whilst some may seek political engagement, be it through organised protests or writing letters and petitioning leaders.

Everyone can do something, so as long as you recognise the need for change, believe in a goal bigger than yourself and accept personal responsibility for making that change - be it local, national or international.

The important thing is that you acknowledge your relative fortune and find a way to pass it on to others. Each of us has been blessed with something that others do not have. It may be your money, your time, your skills, your intelligence or one of a hundred other things. We all have something to offer.

Like Hussain, who built bridges across his community to establish unity, we too must be willing to reach out to others to rebuild our communities. Like Hussain, who refused to submit to intimidation as a matter of moral principle, we too must be ready to draw a line in the sand between good and evil. Like Hussain, who gave everything he had for the dignity of his society, we too must be prepared to make sacrifices (small or big) to establish a lasting difference. Like Hussain, who

In the last moments of his life, after all his family and friends had been killed one by one, Hussain roared “Is there anyone left to help me?”. This final act of Hussain, has been widely been understood to be a rallying cry against oppression for every era, and has inspired millions from all corners of the world who respond to his call by standing for justice, equality and humanity.

Inspired by Hussain’s legacy, and responding to the same call, the ‘Who is Hussain’ movement provides a platform for individuals across the world to take part in charitable activities which aim to give back to society and help those most in need.



WHO IS HUSSAIN – A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Who is Hussain empowers communities around the world to organise charitable events for the common good. We aim to inspire individuals through the timeless example of Hussain, and the values he stood for; those of justice and dignity.

We are a global movement with representatives in over 70 cities worldwide. From helping the homeless and feeding the hungry, to donating blood to save lives, our global reps are united in their effort to inspire and bring positive change. Our goal is to create spaces where individuals like you can take part, feel inspired and work towards making a meaningful difference.

The Who is Hussain movement was launched in 2012 in the UK by a young group of Londoners from different backgrounds brought together by their shared admiration for Hussain.

In the years since, the movement has organically spread swiftly to over 70 cities in 29 countries across the world. Our dedicated volunteers are from diverse backgrounds; old and young, male and female, black and white, of all faiths and none.

Since 2014, our volunteers have:

Donated over 2,130 individual units of blood (working with hospitals or state health services in respective countries). In Mauritius, our reps were presented an award by the country's Blood Donor Association in recognition of the immense amount collected. In Lebanon, volunteers broke the national record for the highest number of units of blood donated in one day.

Distributed over 268,929 meals to the needy all across the world. Our reps in India alone organised the distribution of 160,000 meals. In addition, our reps in London and Zimbabwe offer a weekly food drive for the homeless and poor.

Opened a food bank in Birmingham, UK (following years of organising food drives for the local community).

Carried out over 138,000 'acts of kindness' which range from giving out hot chocolate or roses (with inspirational messages attached) to passers-by to distributing water bottles on hot days

or in times of need, including tens of thousands given to the Red Cross in Flint, Michigan (USA) during their water crisis.

Collected and distributed £65,000 in charity (\$86,000) to help with appeals including; raising money for the refugee crisis in Europe, providing emergency accommodation and aid to Iraqis displaced by ISIS, sponsoring life-saving heart surgeries for Iraqi children, supporting a UK based charity for the homeless, raising money for the East African drought crisis and much more.

We would love to welcome you to our growing movement, you can get involved with Who is Hussain. Visit our website to see a full list of upcoming events which you can attend and take part in, additionally you can [browse the Global Reps Directory](#) to find and join a team of volunteers near you!



TAKE THE NEXT STEP

If you would like to ask any questions you may have about Hussain, his values or our movement - please click the button below.

Find out more!