

Instructor's comments:

This is an example of Assignment t#3 in the A range. The name of the student was removed.

Part 1: FGM

a) Identify all the pieces of evidence that Aslan provides for the claim that FGM is an African problem, not an Islamic problem.

- i. Eritrea is almost 90% FGM and it's a Christian country.
- ii. Ethiopia has almost 75% FGM and it's also a Christian country.
- iii. FGM is not an issue in Muslim states outside of Africa.
 - Reza Aslan brings up several other arguments and makes several claims but they are not relevant to FGM.

b) Identify all the pieces of evidence that Heider provides against Aslan's claim.

- i. The study that Aslan referred to only had data on FGM in Africa because they couldn't procure enough data for countries outside of Africa, not because FGM is not practiced outside of Africa.
- ii. About 97.5% of Muslim women in Indonesia have experienced FGM in one form or another.
- iii. About 93% of Muslim women in Malaysia have experienced FGM in one form or another.
 - She also brings up examples of other instances where Aslan has provided false information to make his argument in order to bring his credibility into question.

c) Look for further evidence that supports Aslan. Cite your sources.

- i. Haseena Lockhat states "When one considers that the practice does not prevail and is much condemned in countries like Saudi Arabia, the center of Islamic practice is a false one" in her book titled *Female Genital Mutilation: Treating the tears*.
 - This supports Aslan's claim that FGM is not a Muslim practice since there is little to no evidence and support of this practice in many Muslim countries.
 - Haseena Lockhat, *Female Genital Mutilation: Treating the Tears* (London: Middlesex University Press, 2004), p. 16. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.
 - Asmani, Ibrahim Lethome, and Maryam Sheikh Abdi. "Delinking Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting from Islam." USAID, 2008. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.

- ii. In his paper titled “The Jewish and Christian view on female genital mutilation”, El-Damanhoury discusses how FGM is practiced in some Christian and Jewish groups too and is not exclusive to Muslims. He also discusses how FGM is a result of social and cultural pressures that forces people to take part in this practice with fear of exclusion from their society.
 - This supports Aslan’s claim that FGM is not exclusive to Muslims only and that the practice is a result of other factors and not just an individual’s religion.
 - El-Damanhoury, I. "The Jewish and Christian View on Female Genital Mutilation." *African Journal of Urology* 19.3 (2013): 127-29. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.

d) Look for further evidence that supports Heider. Cite your sources.

- i. “Circumcision is a law for men and a preservation of honour for women.” Ahmad Ibn Hanbal 5:75; Abu Dawud, Adab 167.
 - This translated quote from *Kitab Al-Adab* (General Behavior) is referred to by many Muslims when they seek guidance on how to do certain things according to Islam and this translation is evidence that even if Islam doesn’t enforce FGM it certainly encourages it. This disputes Aslan’s claim that FGM is not a Muslim issue and supports Heider’s counter argument to Aslan.
 - Dawud, Abu. "General Behavior (Kitab Al-Adab)." *Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement*. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.
- ii. An article titled “Fighting female genital mutilation among India’s Bohra” by Sophie Cousins sheds light on how a small sect of Bohra Muslim’s forcefully perform FGM on women and the aftermath of this practice.
 - This supports Heider’s claim that FGM is not only limited to Africa and that just because there isn’t much data about it, does not automatically mean that the issue doesn’t exist in certain parts.
 - Cousins, Sophie. "Fighting Female Genital Mutilation among India's Bohra." - *Al Jazeera English*. 16 Mar. 2016. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.

e) In the light of the above, provide a reasoned and careful assessment of the disagreement between Aslan and Heider. Is one of the two right? Is neither right? Are they both right? Motivate your answer.

- Based on the arguments provided by Aslan and Heider and the additional information I have encountered with respect to their views, I believe that both Aslan and Heider are right and wrong to some extent. Aslan is right in the sense that Islam itself isn’t the key reason behind FGM being practiced in certain communities but he is wrong because it is not just an African problem. There are

examples, albeit isolated and rare, that prove that FGM is a global issue. Also, from what I gather, Aslan's main point was that Islam doesn't play a role in a society practicing FGM, which is false because Islam may not support FGM but it certainly doesn't condemn it either. In fact, one could argue that the oppressive approach of Islam towards women and sexuality makes it possible for certain societies to enforce such practices. Heider on the hand is accurate in her counter argument that FGM does take place in Muslim countries outside of Africa but her failure to take into account the several other factors that allow FGM to take place beside Islam and implying FGM in those parts of the world is a result of Islam only makes her argument false too. Both Aslan and Heider bring up very interesting points but I believe they are both biased because of their personal beliefs respectively.

Part 3: Living conditions in the Palestinian territories

a) Identify 3 factual claims Rania makes about the living conditions in the Palestinian territories.

- i. A third of the population in Jordan are Palestinian refugees.
- ii. Almost 40% of the West Bank is now covered by Israel settlement related infrastructure.
- iii. Unemployment approaching 50% in Gaza.

b) Check whether the 3 factual claims made by Rania are correct. Cite your sources

- i. The first claim made by Rania is correct based on my fact checking. Although the two sources cited below differ in their estimate of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan (one states that as of 2010 the number was 1.9 million out of 6 million and the other states that as of 2015 there are 2.1 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan), the number is around one third of the overall population of Jordan.
 - Chatelard, Geraldine. "Jordan: A Refugee Haven." *Migrationpolicy.org*. Migration Policy Institute, 31 Aug. 2010. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.
 - Malkawi, Khetam. "Refugees Constitute Third of Jordan Population - World Bank Official." *Jordan Times*. The Jordan Times, 19 Dec. 2015. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.
- ii. According to a report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs from 2007, Israeli infrastructure does cover up approximately 40% of the West Bank. This report proves that the statement made by Rania is accurate.
 - "The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank." *OCHA Occupied Palestinian Territory*. The United Nations, 2007. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.
- iii. According to the source cited below, in 2015 the unemployment rate in Gaza was 43%, which renders Rania's claim inaccurate. However, taking into consideration that the youth unemployment rate was 60% in 2015 and that Rania's speech was delivered in 2009, it can be concluded that she was either referring to the youth unemployment in Gaza or the unemployment rate has declined since she delivered the speech.

- "Gaza Economy on the Verge of Collapse, Youth Unemployment Highest in the Region at 60 Percent." *The World Bank*, 21 May 2015. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.

c) Look for other factual claims about the living conditions in the Palestinian territories. These can be about economic indicators or historical events. Cite your sources.

- i. According to the latest available data, Palestinian territories exported US\$ 444 million worth of goods and imported US\$207 billion worth of goods. This is a reflection on how dire the economic conditions in Palestine are and also reflects on how effective the Paris Protocol has been.

- Zuliani, L. "Palestine Trade, Imports and Exports." *Economy Watch*, 17 Mar. 2011. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.

d) Identify 3 anecdotal claims Rania makes about the living conditions in the Palestinian territories.

- i. Soldiers are constantly stopping people and asking for identification. Identification determines what they can and can't do and where they can and can't go. It excludes people and boxes them in. One individual refers to it as a jail where no one knows how long their sentence is.
- ii. All traffic is stopped which leads to people being stuck in traffic for hours and often going back without completing their intended tasks. This rule also applies to ambulances which hinders medical assistance.
- iii. Hospitals lack power, which means that those who need medical attention either don't get it or don't get it as well as they could.

e) By combining factual and anecdotal claims, assess the living conditions in the Palestinian territories and compare. Make the comparison precise and cite your sources.

- i. Based on the factual and anecdotal claims from Rania, the living conditions in the Palestinian territories sound like a nightmare. The economic hardships, the delays, the constant fear of losing what little they have left and the not knowing of how long this will last. To be precise, the unemployment rate in Gaza was 43% in 2015 and 60% for the youth of the territory and to make a comparison, the unemployment rate in the U.S during the Great Depression reached almost 25% (1933). Because of the devastation it cause and the loss of hope it lead to some refer to the Great Depression as the most difficult time in the history of the U.S and seeing how the unemployment rate in the Palestinian territories was almost twice that in 2015, one can only imagine the desperation and chaos the public must be feeling. And the longer we wait to somehow reach a compromise and create peace, the more the living conditions will deteriorate.

- Margo, R. Employment and Unemployment in the 1930s. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Vol. 7. 1993. Web. 7 Mar. 2016