with al-Nimeiry gradually became more cordial until, in 1979, the latter invited al-Turabi back to the Sudan to take up the post of Attorney General. Simultaneously, Al-Turabi was also appointed to revise Sudanese law so that it conformed to the Shari’ah. However, before this ‘Islamisation’ project could be completed, al-Turabi was dismissed from his position and arrested once again.

When General Omar Bashir came to power in 1989, al-Turabi initially found himself imprisoned for several months. Upon his release, however, he was appointed Foreign Minister – a position he held only briefly before being removed. His subsequent absence from frontline politics afforded him the opportunity to strengthen his own political party, National Islamic Front (NIF), and its membership. After the 1996 elections, his party’s success allowed him to become the Speaker of Parliament. During his tenure, he was criticised for trying to reduce Bashir’s Presidential powers. Perhaps because of this, in 1999 al-Turabi was dismissed from his position and imprisoned again. Later, he became the only Sudanese politician to publicly demand that President Bashir surrender himself to the International Criminal Court (ICC) after that institute issued an arrest warrant for him following the crimes committed in Darfur. Al-Turabi was arrested again in 2011 after his open criticism of the President.

Although he married the sister of two-times Prime Minister and leader of the National Umma Party, Sadiq al-Mahdi, al-Turabi’s ties and affiliations with the Presidents and Prime Ministers of Sudan were never consistent. For him, friends frequently became foes. He had a remarkable life in which imprisonment and detention were interspersed with periods of influence and high office. Although often criticised by many for his political affiliations, he is considered one of his country’s most influential Islamic ideologues.

On 5 March 2016, al-Turabi suffered a heart attack and breathed his last at the Royal Care International Hospital in Khartoum. He will be remembered by many for his dedication to the establishment of an Islamic government. He is survived by his wife, Wisal Mahdi, and two sons, Isam and Sadiq. May Allah s.w.t. bless his soul! Aameen!

Mumtaz Ahmad, an Intellectual Icon (1940 - 2016)

Abdul Rashid Moten

As stated in the Qur’an, death is inevitable. Mumtaz Ahmad received the call from his Lord and departed this world, in full faith, on 31 March 2016, aged 76. Friends and relatives offered his funeral prayers at his native village in Gujar Khan, Pakistan.
Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad was a fine gentleman, a lucid political scientist and an erudite scholar of Islam. He received Masters degrees from Karachi and the American University of Beirut, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago, where between 1976 and 1981 he was a student of Professor Fazlur Rahman. Following his education, he spent more than half a century teaching at numerous institutions, including Hampton University, Va., USA. During his distinguished career he was also a member of the “Fundamentalism Project” at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, University of Chicago; Vice-President of the Centre for Islam and Public Policy (CIPP), Washington, D.C.; and President of the South Asian Muslim Studies Association (SAMSA). He also served as a Visiting Professor at the International Islamic University Malaysia and International Islamic University (IIU), Islamabad, Pakistan. At the time of his death, he was the Executive Director of the Iqbal International Institute for Research and Dialogue based at IIU Islamabad.

Prof. Mumtaz Ahmad published nine books, in addition to numerous book chapters, journal articles and encyclopaedia entries. His very first book, on the Kashmir issue, was honoured with a foreword by Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi. His writings ranged from the classical period to modern times, from social psychology to the politics of contemporary Islamic movements, and from the history of Islamic political thought and institutions to the contemporary socio-economic and political developments of South Asia and the Middle East. His writings portrayed his intellectual brilliance and bore witness to his faith in the religion of Islam. He believed that open discussion and dialogue represented the very essence of Islam. He endorsed the validity of pluralism, arguing that it was an essential element of all true Islamic polities. He was therefore broadminded and tolerant of differing viewpoints.

Right up until the end, Prof. Mumtaz Ahmad loved to teach. He provoked students to speak out. He was, however, concerned about an intellectual malaise in the Islamic educational system, believing that the latter had become ossified. On several occasions he associated the decline of Muslim power with the decline of Muslim intellectual vigour. Whenever he saw his undergraduate students wearing jeans, drinking Coke, and listening to rap music, he worried that they had forgotten about their sacred mission in this world. He believed in the possibility of civilisational revival, but maintained that it could only happen through intellectual revolution, a process in which intellectuals must play a role. He lamented, however, that very few intellectuals could be seen hanging around Muslim universities. The logic of commodity, he believed, had penetrated the world of academia; the free play of the mind was no longer nurtured by those in authority.

Prof. Mumtaz Ahmad impacted on many lives, whether as a committed mentor, colleague or friend. He influenced many Muslim intellectuals and
students, both at home and abroad. Many of his former students, both Muslims and non-Muslims, are now outstanding scholars in their own right, teaching in universities and colleges. He influenced many, all of whom will remember his smile, his warmth, his energy, his love for family and friends. Professor Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad is survived by his wife and two sons.

Zafar Ishaq Ansari (1932 - 2016)

Dheen Mohammed

Last week, the world of Islam lost one of its most benevolent sons, someone who worked tirelessly and unassumingly to promote knowledge with remarkable dedication and enthusiasm. Prof. Zafar Ishaq Ansari has joined the long list of luminaries who have bowed out of this finite world, in sha Allah to live on as a resplendent star guiding all wayfarers in their search for knowledge.

Many are my memories and recollections of his personality, each more powerful than the next, each vying to drop from the pen onto the page. Yet, one image stands out above the others – that of a perpetual teacher, a perennial mentor who exhausted all the strengths of his heart, soul and mind in serving the cause of Islam and creating a generation of scholars and researchers capable of carrying his legacy on to future generations. All this he did without pretension or affectation, just sheer dedication, humility, sincerity, resolve and a uniquely balanced viewpoint.

I had the privilege of working with Prof. Ansari at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) from 1990 to 2004. As a senior colleague, he was always encouraging me to read and research. I saw in him a revival of “the spirit of the fatherly scholar,” something we so often hear about yet so rarely witness. Although Prof. Ansari was frequently sought out by visiting scholars, both domestic and international, big and small, nothing pleased him more than the weekly study forums he hosted for young graduate students. Prof. Ansari found much happiness in coaching these young researchers, in guiding them in their respective fields and always being ready to spend (especially after his wife’s demise) any amount of time advising them. Many past attendees of these forums have since gone on to become prominent researchers in their own right, recognised around the world for the quality of their work. They included such notables as Dr. Modassir Ali, Dr. Qaiser Shahzad, Dr. Muhammad Akram, Mr. Azfar Saeed and his wife Ms. Hafeeza (all from Pakistan), Dr. Faruk Terzic (Bosnia Herzegovina), and Dr. Zuhratuddin (China). But despite being a man of great knowledge and experience, Prof. Ansari was extremely humble; he always