

EAST TEXAS ISLAMIC SOCIETY

Eid Feast Time To Celebrate

Muslim Community Gathers This Week At Close Of Ramadan



STORY BY REBECCA HOFFNER, STAFF WRITER ■ STAFF PHOTOS BY JAIME R. CARRERO

PRAYER: Above, a little girl walks between rows of praying men during the Eid celebration at the East Texas Islamic Society Mosque. At right, Imam Faisal Ahmad conducts a service during the celebration of the Eid holiday. Below, a young woman displays henna decorations on her hands while she holds a small child dressed in traditional clothes during the celebration.



Members of the East Texas Islamic Society greeted one another warmly at their holiday service Wednesday, saying “Eid Mubarak” and embracing, as is tradition for Eid al-Fitr, the holiday that marks the end of the month of Ramadan.

Zikra Imtaiz, 17, attends Gladewater High School. Her eyes light up when she talks about why she likes her favorite holiday.

“Eid is so cool,” she said. “We’ve been fasting the month of Ramadan, and now we can eat. I didn’t wear makeup the whole month of Ramadan.”

On the first day of Eid, Miss Imtaiz’s eyes were lined and her hands were covered in intricate henna designs, an Eid tradition among Muslim women.

Ms. Imtaiz and many of the others who attended the morning service at the mosque likened the holiday to Christmas in importance for their faith.

Gift-giving is another tradition of the holiday; Aya Kebir, 14, showed off the watch she got from her sister. For Miss Kebir, this Eid is bittersweet. Her parents left to visit relatives in Libya before the revolt began, and they’ve been unable to get back since the violence started.

“I wish they were here,” she said. “As long as they’re safe, though, that’s all I care about.”

The women’s prayer room was packed for the Eid prayer service and message from the imam. It’s one of the mosque’s highest attended holidays.

Before the Muslim community enjoyed the Eid holiday feast, the imam’s message reminded them not to forget the lessons of Ramadan.

“Ramadan has filled our minds with blessings,” he said in his sermon Wednesday. “It has awakened our conscience and purified our souls. He who has benefited from Ramadan is the one whose condition after Ramadan becomes better than it was before.”

Members of the mosque reflected on the imam’s message as they enjoyed a potluck of holiday food representing the diversity of the nationalities of the members.

“Some of the things the imam was saying, I was like, ‘Man, is he talking to me?’” Abdullah Shakur said.

In the afternoon, members of the Muslim community gathered at Harvey Convention Center to play games and rented inflatable obstacle courses for children to play on. Last year’s Eid celebration was held outside the mosque, but the holiday moved to a hotter part of the year because it’s dictated by the lunar calendar. The board decided to reserve the convention center to alleviate parents’ concerns about the heat.

Anwar Khalifa stopped one of the children running by and handed her a \$2 bill. Adults usually give children money as part of the holiday, he said.

“When I was a kid, I remember getting brand new Egyptian currency and going to the toy store with my eidaya money,” he said. “My kids remember getting their money, too. They’re grown now, but it’s fond memories for us.”

commentary



REBECCA HOFFNER

Answering Difficult Questions With Faith

Sometimes there are no easy answers. I hate those times. I especially hate writing about those times. But I try to write about them, with as much grace and sensitivity as humanly possible, because hard questions shouldn’t be avoided. Something I saw Sunday night on CNN had disturbed me all week. The re-

porter was allowed into the home of Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, the man convicted of blowing up Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988. The plane exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 259 people on board and 11 on the ground. Of the dead, 189 were Americans. The Scottish government released Al-Megrahi from prison in 2009 on “compassionate grounds,” believing he would die within a few months from the cancer

engulfing his body. He had served eight years of his 27-year sentence. The families of the victims were outraged at his release and his hero’s welcome back to Libya. That was two years ago. CNN was allowed inside Al-Megrahi’s home on Sunday by his family members. What they found was a man lying in a coma, surviving on oxygen and an IV drip. The elderly woman sitting next to him with grief in her eyes

is his mother. The young man whose voice quivered with emotion during the interview is his son. Many people still are calling for Al-Megrahi to be extradited back to the United States to be tried in a U.S. court. There is such a longing for justice after what many considered to be a sham of a trial in Scotland.

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