

IMAM KHOMEINI'S INTERNATIONAL QUDS DAY: FROM STREET MARCHES TO CYBER-DEMONSTRATIONS

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Abstract

Consecration of the last Friday of Ramadan as International Quds Day is among the precious legacies bequeathed to us by Imam Khomeini. Since its consecration in August 1979, march demonstrations around the world has intensified every year both in terms of the scope and number of participation in the demonstrations.

With the advent of the Internet, Quds Day rallies and marches have found a new space—the cyberspace. Now, the street marches in the real world are complemented by the various forms of Quds Day demonstrations in the virtual world, which have their own particular peculiarities as well as limitations compared to the actual demonstrations.

Introduction

*"I invite all Muslims over the globe to consecrate the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as 'Quds Day' and to proclaim the international solidarity of Muslims in support of the legitimate rights of the Muslim people of Palestine."*¹

Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini

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¹ Quoted in "Quds Day," *Innovative Minds Website*, <http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday.html>, 2001; "Message of Imam Khomeini on the Occasion of the Day of Quds," *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution: Echo of Islam Magazine Special Issue*, vol. 1, p. 202; *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini* (Tehran: International Affairs Department of the Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, Autumn 1999), p. 137; "Announcement of International Quds Day," *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) World Service Website*, http://www.irib.com/worldservice/imam/palestin_E/10.htm, 2002.

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 not only marks the triumph of the Islamic movement in Iran, but also heralds the dawn of a new phase in the Palestinian struggle against Israel. Barely a half year after the establishment of the Islamic government, the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution, founder of the Islamic Republic and magnificent idol-breaker of the 20th century, Imam Khomeini (*may his soul be sanctified*) made the historic consecration announcement of the last Friday of the majestic month of fasting, Ramadan, as 'Quds¹ Day' to signify the global Muslims' gesture of solidarity and support to all the oppressed peoples of the world as epitomized by the Palestinian people under the Zionist regime.

In his first message on the occasion of the auspicious day, the Imam of the *ummah* reveals that Quds day is a global day; thus, a day not exclusively for Quds. For him, it is a day of confrontation for nations that have been under tyranny. Accordingly, it is a day when the oppressed should become equipped against the oppressors and "they should rub their noses in the dirt."²

Now, a quarter of a century after the declaration of the last Friday of every month of Ramadan as Quds Day, it is high time to assess the extent of the global Muslims' paying heed to the call for espousal of the right of the Palestinian nation. With the advent of the Internet, Quds Day rallies and marches have found a new space—the cyberspace. The street marches in the real world are complemented by the various forms of Quds Day demonstrations in the virtual world.

Statement of the Problem

Against this backdrop, a descriptive-analytical survey of the various forms of cyber-demonstrations for the Quds Day since mid-1990s is the main concern of this study.

This paper sought to know the various forms of Quds Day demonstrations in the cyberspace. Standing on the proposition that the 'online' demonstrations do not substitute the 'offline' marches and rallies, but complement each other, this paper examines the prospects and constraints of the former (i.e., cyber-

¹ Quds is the Arabic word for Jerusalem and means 'the holy.' Jerusalem is revered as the third holiest city in Islam, after Mecca and Medina. *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini*, ft. 2, p. ii. In this paper, wherever the term is spelled with letter 'o' [Qods] in direct quotations and Internet addresses, I retained the alternative spelling

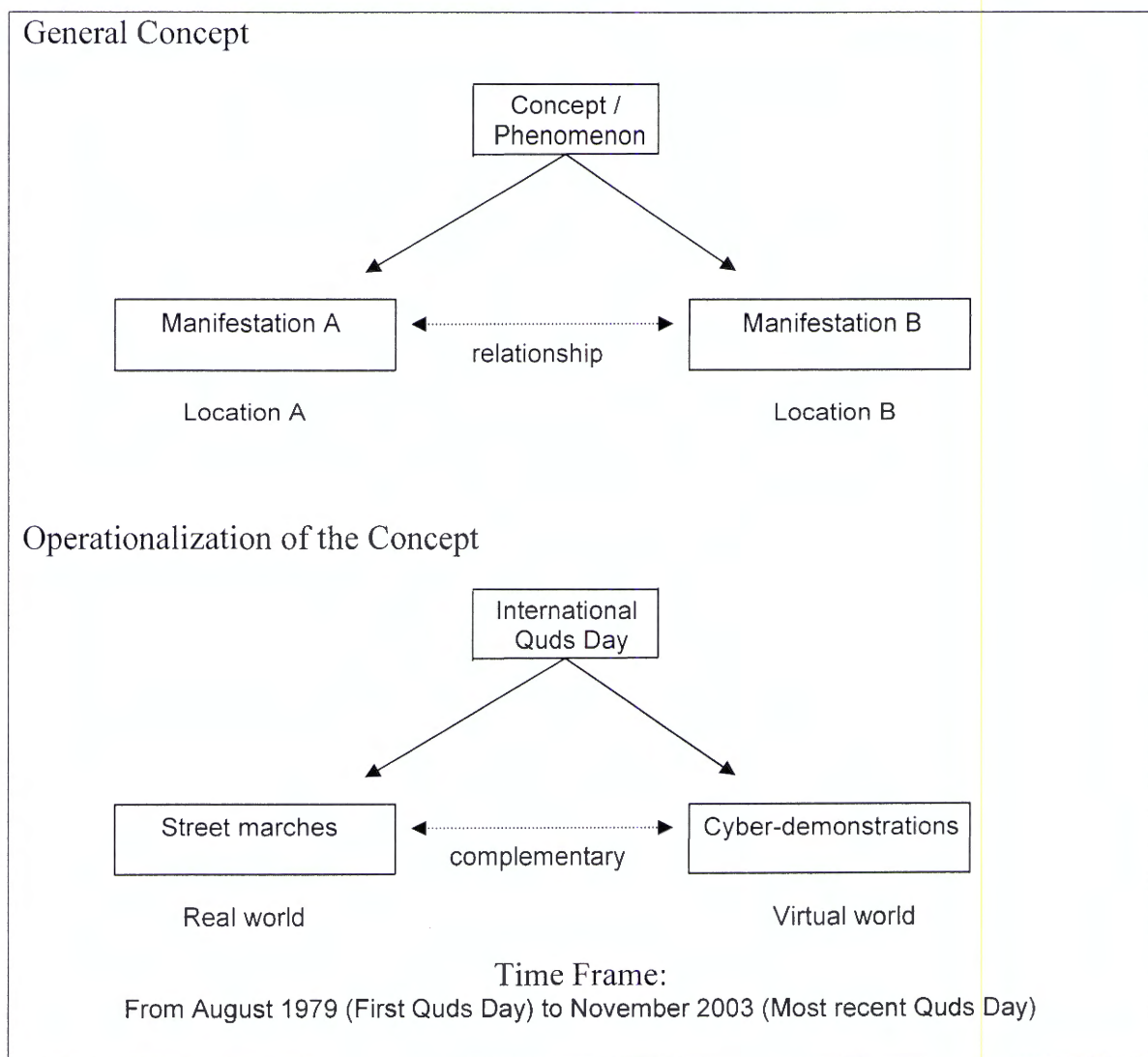
² *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, *ibid.*

demonstrations). In particular, this article attempted to address the following queries, thus:

1. What is the significance of Imam Khomeini's sanctification of the last Friday of Ramadan as International Quds Day in the struggle of the Palestinian people?
2. Has the participation's scope and number intensified in the Quds Day demonstrations around the world?
3. What are the various forms of Quds Day demonstration in the cyberspace and what are their merits and demerits compared to the actual march rallies in the streets around the world? What is the nature of relationship between the street marches and the cyber-demonstrations?

Diagrammatically, this academic inquiry can be represented as follows:

Figure 1 Diagrammatical Representation of the Study



Initially, this paper explored the significance of the Quds Day in expressing solidarity to the Palestinian nation against the Zionist occupier regime.

Then, it gave a descriptive survey of the Quds Day march rallies in the 'real' world since August 1979.

Thereafter, it dealt lengthily on the various forms of Quds Day demonstrations in the cyberspace. While acknowledging that cyberspace constitutes wider political, social, economic, cultural, and financial networks of software and hardware,¹ in this paper it mainly refers to the Internet. In other words, throughout the paper the Barlovian cyberspace is referred to and not the Gibsonian's. Barlovian cyberspace is that which is understood as the space computer networks create as opposed to the Gibsonian cyberspace which is understood as a fictional and visionary conception of the same.² Cyberspace, in contrast to the 'meatspace' (i.e., the real world) is hereby alternatively referred to as the 'virtual world', 'offline' and 'informational superhighway'.

The International Quds Day

To fully grasp the importance of the declaration of the last Friday of Ramadan as Quds Day, it is necessary to quote at some length the first message of the champion of the oppressed, which lays down the cornerstone of the Imam's conception of, and philosophy behind, the declaration, and the subsequent messages are based on these declarations. Thereafter, we will analyze the implication of the key points of the statements towards the Palestinian Question.

"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

"For many years I have been warning Muslims of the menace posed by the usurper Israel which has recently intensified her savage raids on our Palestinian brothers and sisters. Bent on the destruction of Palestinian freedom fighters, Israel has been ceaselessly bombing their houses and homes in Southern Lebanon.

"I call on the Muslims of the world as well as on all Islamic governments to join forces to cut down this usurper and its supporters. I invite Muslims all over the globe to consecrate the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan—which is a 'day of fate' and which could also become the day on which the fate of the Palestinian people might be determined—as 'Quds Day' and to proclaim the international solidarity of Muslims in support of the legitimate rights of the Muslim people of Palestine.

"I pray to the Almighty for the victory of the Muslims over the infidels.

¹ Jason Whittaker, *The Cyberspace Handbook* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 3-5.

² See Tim Jordan, *Cyberpower: The Culture and Politics of Cyberspace and the Internet* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 20-21.

"May peace and mercy of God be upon you."

*Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini
Ramadan 1399 AH (August 1979)*

"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

"Quds day is a global day. It is not a day exclusively for Quds. It is a day when the oppressed confront the oppressors. It is a day of confrontations for nations that have been under the tyranny of the American government and other oppressors. It is a day when the oppressed should become equipped against the oppressors and they should rub their noses in the dirt. It's a day when committed individuals are preferred over hypocrites. Dedicated people consider today as Quds day and act as they are obliged. The hypocrites and those who are secretly acquainted with the superpowers and are friendly with Israel, today are indifferent or do not allow the nations to demonstrate on this day.

"Quds day is a day when the fate of the oppressed nations must be determined. Oppressed nations should make their presence known to the oppressors, just like Iran rose up and defeated and will defeat. All nations should rise up and throw these germs of corruption in the garbage. Quds day is a day when these followers of Iran's past regime and these corrupt plot-making regimes and superpowers in other places, especially in Lebanon, should know their assignment. It is a day when we and they should exert our efforts to liberate Quds and save our Lebanese brothers.

"It is a day when we have to rescue the oppressed from the claws of the oppressors. It is a day when the Islamic society should make its presence known to all superpowers and their pulp, whether in Iran or other places. It is a day when these intellectuals who have formed a relation with America or American agents should be warned—warned that if they don't quit this interfering, they will be suppressed...

"Quds day is the day when superpowers should be warned that they must leave the oppressed alone and sit back and take their own place. Israel has become the enemy of humanity who daily starts a new uproar setting our brothers in Southern Lebanon on fire. Israel should try to understand that its masters don't have any power any longer. They should choose isolation. They should cut their covetousness of Iran and take their hands off all Islamic countries.

"Quds day is the day of announcing such an issue. It is the declaration that the satanic superpowers want to isolate the Islamic nations and impose themselves on the scene of action. Quds day is a day when their wishes should be chopped and they should be warned that those times are gone.

"The day of Quds is the day of Islam. All Muslims must be warned and must understand how strong their spiritual and economic powers are. Muslims are one billion people, supported by God, Islam and the power of faith. Why should they be afraid? ...

"All the governments of the world must know that Islam is invincible. Islam and the Qur'an will conquer the world. A true religion should be a divine religion. Islam is a divine religion and thus must be promoted throughout the whole world.

"The Day of Quds is such a day and announces such a goal, announcing the progress of the Muslims all over the world. The Day of Quds is not only the Day of

Palestine, but it is a day of Islam, as well. It is the day of Islamic government. It is the day that the banner of Islam is to be flown in all countries and the Muslims must show the superpowers that they cannot influence Islamic countries any longer. They must realize that the day of Quds is Islam's and the Prophet's Day, the day that we must muster all our powers and all of the Muslims must come out of isolation and stand against the foreigners with all of their strength...

"The Day of Quds is the day that we will realize which regime and persons are cooperating with international conspirators and thus are opposing Islam. Those who do not participate in these demonstrations are opposing Islam and thus are in agreement with Israel. Those who participate in the demonstrations on this day are responsible people and are in stride with Islam and thus oppose Israel.

"The Day of Quds is a day to distinguish between truth and falsehood. I ask God Almighty to give victory to Islam over all of the other faiths and support the deprived in order to defeat the arrogant 'those who cause deprivation'. I implore God to free our Muslim brothers in Palestine and South Lebanon and everywhere in the world from the oppressors, deprivers and plunderers.

*"Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of God and the Imams of the Muslims."*¹

A close scrutiny of the foregoing message would bring to light the following points with paramount import to the Palestinian issue:

First of all, by stressing that "For many years I have been warning Muslims of the menace posed by the usurper Israel which has recently intensified her savage raids on our Palestinian brothers and sisters," Imam Khomeini's concern to the issue is not a new one born out of the establishment of the Islamic Republic. It is not meant to be an empty rhetoric aimed at winning the heart of the Arabs or at least the Palestinians towards the Islamic political establishment in Tehran. Instead, it has been a priority agendum for him as a concerned Muslim worth the name long years before the Islamic Revolution.²

Secondly, though "all Islamic governments" are mentioned, undoubtedly Imam Khomeini's invitation to consecrate the last Friday of the fasting month is mainly addressed to the Muslim masses of the world as suggested by the remarkable repetitions—"I have been warning Muslims," "I call on the Muslims of the world," and "I invite all Muslims all over the globe." It shows that he is pinning hope on the masses, and not their governments, as they have the power to

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-205; *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini*, pp. 137-139; "Announcement of International Quds Day."

² For Imam Khomeini's speeches, messages, and interviews espousing his unflinching stance against the State of Israel in support of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, see *Sahifeh-ye Imam: An Anthology of Imam Khomeini's Speeches, Messages, Interviews, Decrees, Religious Permissions, and Letters* Vols. 1-5 (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1379 AHS).

mobilize once organized. Another reason behind his reliance on the people is indicated by his remarks,

“It’s a day [Quds day] when committed individuals are preferred over hypocrites. Dedicated people consider today as Quds day and act as they are obliged. The hypocrites and those who are secretly acquainted with the superpowers and are friendly with Israel, today are indifferent or do not allow the nations to demonstrate on this day.”¹

Quality as represented by “committed individuals” are favored over quantity as represented particularly by “the hypocrites”—alluding to those in the high echelon of the governments in the Muslim world—who, according to the Imam, “are indifferent and do not allow the nations to demonstrate today.”²

Thirdly, in this message the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution points to the true nature and scope of the Quds day as the day of all the oppressed and deprived people in confrontation with the world devourers and oppressors: “Quds day is a global day. It is not a day exclusively for Quds. It is a day when the oppressed confront the oppressors.” If it is named “Quds Day” it is only because the Palestinian Question is a paradigmatic example of an oppressed nation under the yoke of a regional power fully backed by superpowers. Besides, in this clash between the oppressed and the oppressors, the *modus operandi* proposed by Ayatullah Khomeini is for the oppressed unified front to exhibit their existence and resistance against the arrogant powers and their surrogate agents in a bid to demonstrate their power of unity, will and dedication: “It is a day when the Islamic society should make its presence known to all superpowers and their pulp.”³

Fourthly, by declaring that “The day of Quds is not only the day of Palestine, but it is the day of Islam,” the Imam made it clear the true essence and orientation of the Palestinian issue. If for the past three decades then, the issue had been reckoned as confined within the bounds of Arabism particularly during the apex of Nasserism in the Arab world, in this communiqué it is asserted that the matter is an Islamic one and therefore, it concerns all the Muslims of the world. And bearing in mind that it is an Islamic question involving the entire Muslim *ummah*, he reminds them of their spiritual and material strength as he admonishes: “All Muslims must be warned and understand how strong their spiritual and economic powers are. Muslims are one billion people, supported by God, Islam and the power of faith. Why should they be afraid?”⁴

¹ *Loc. cit.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

Lastly, taking into account the Islamic nature of the issue, which is supposed to have a place in the heart of every true believer, Imam Khomeini views the International Quds Day as a distinguisher [*faruq*] and criterion [*furqan*] when he rightly argues:

“The Day of Quds is the day that we will realize which regime and persons are cooperating with international conspirators and thus are opposing Islam. Those who do not participate in these demonstrations are opposing Islam and thus are in agreement with Israel. Those who participate and have demonstrations on this day are responsible people who are in stride with Islam and thus oppose Israel.”¹

In sum, championing the legitimate cause of the Palestinians had been part of Imam Khomeini’s agenda long time before the formation of the Islamic political establishment in Iran. International Quds Day is the day when the Muslim masses are called for to go out and demonstrate their sense of solidarity and support to the Palestinian people. It is the day marking the conflict between the oppressed of the world and their oppressors. The Palestinian problem is an Islamic issue and is thus not only the business of the Arabs. Commemoration of the Quds day through participation in the demonstrations delineates those clinging to Islam from those subservient to Israel.

Quds Day in the Real World: Street Marches

During the past twenty-five years since the unprecedented sanctification of the last Friday of the majestic month of Ramadan as International Quds Day by the Imam of the *ummah*, what has been the response of the global Muslims to this call for demonstration of camaraderie with the Palestinian people? Has the Quds day mass rally been restricted to Iran only?

An examination of the news around the world on every last Friday of Ramadan shows that mass demonstrations in the different parts of the globe during the past two decades have gained momentum qualitatively and quantitatively. In major cities from Mindanao in the East to the United States in the West, from Scandinavia in the North to South Africa in the South, fasting demonstrators and marchers chant divergent slogans of sympathy to the plight of the Palestinians and condemnation of the crimes unabatedly perpetrated by the occupier regime in Tel Aviv.² Muslims and even non-Muslims including Jews, and Sunnis and Shi‘ah

¹ *Ibid.*

² Murraray Kahl, “One Picture is Worth a Thousand Lives,” *Conference for Middle East Peace (CMEP)*, <http://www.cmepe.com/temple1.htm>, 1997.

join together in observing this august occasion. In the end the participants usually release al-Quds Day resolutions and vows. Nevertheless, Quds Day rally is still banned in many cities in Muslim countries.

In the Philippines where Muslims constitute a minority of five to ten percent of the total population of the country, initially, mostly Iranian students were staging march rally in front of the US and Israel embassies in Manila. As years passed by, however, non-Iranian local Muslims can be seen participating actively. Moreover, similar demonstrations are also held in Mindanao, particularly in Sulu, the cities of Zamboanga and Marawi. At times even *Sunni* *'ulama* have touched on the issue of Palestine over the radio during *Ramadan*. In Cotabato City, forum and photo exhibit on Palestine are held.¹

In 2001, Quds day was observed in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the Muslim world through offering supplication [*du'a*] in all mosques throughout the day after the Friday congregational prayers. In a statement released on the occasion, Jama'at-e Islami Bangladesh *ameer* [leader] Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami, urged the heads of the Muslim countries to take effective steps to free the Al-Quds from the occupation of Israel and uphold the sanctity and dignity of the first *qiblah* [point of direction in prayer] of the Muslims.²

During the 1997 Quds day in Pakistan, there were street demonstrations outside the main mosques with protesters carrying placards inscribed with slogans like: "Down with America, down with Israel and liberate Muslim holy lands." The sermons and speeches delivered throughout Pakistan "urged the Muslim *ummah* to get united to liberate all Muslim places including Bayt al-Maqaddas, Kashmir, and other lands." In the Punjab, all mosques offered "special prayers for the real liberation of Masjid al-Aqsa [al-Aqsa Mosque] and Palestine from the occupation of Israel."³ In 2000 Quds day the Imamia Students Organization of Pakistan was reported to have staged a rally from Nasser Bagh to Faisal Chowk as in other parts of the country to mark the auspicious day on December 22. Accordingly, participants in the rally were supposed to "adopt resolutions to condemn the role played by the United States, UK and the UN to complicate the problem and express solidarity with the Palestinian freedom fighters."⁴

¹ Mansoor L. Limba, "The Islamic Revolution of Iran: Its Impact upon Islamic Revival in the Philippines" (Master's thesis, Shahid Beheshti University, 2000), p. 39, available on-line at *Mans' Chancery Library*, http://www.geocities.com/m_chancery/thesis.html.

² "Al-Quds Day Today," *Independent Bangladesh Website*, <http://www.independent-bangladesh.com/news/dec/14/14122001mt.htm>, December 14, 2001.

³ Kahl, *op. cit.*

⁴ "Al-Quds Day Rallies on Friday," *Dawn Internet Edition*, <http://www.dawn.com/2000/12/18/nat12.htm>, December 18, 2000.

Second only to Iran, Lebanon is the venue of spectacular march rally of tens of thousands of mostly Hizbullah-member demonstrators every year during the Quds Day. Speaking at the annual parade in Beirut during the year 1999 al-Quds Day, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, Secretary General of the Hizbullah, said,

“Marking this occasion every year has two sides: marking al-Quds Day and marking the course and method of al-Quds’ *imam*, the *ummah’s imam*, inspirer, leader, the revolution’s maker, the resurrection creator, the one who restored religion and hope in the twentieth century and on the eve of the third millennium—the Great Imam Khomeini.”¹

With the theme, “Quds: Symbol of Honor and Solidarity,” a five-day exhibit was held in Damascus on December 9-13, 2001 in commemoration of the International Quds Day. Sponsored by the cultural attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Syria in cooperation with the Palestinian Cultural Heritage Center of the Office of the Jihad Movement, the exhibition featured over 400 photos of *intifadah* clashes and the daily lives of Palestinians as well as handicrafts and paintings by Palestinian artists.²

In 1999 the Morocco-based *Arabic News* reported that Islamic states mark al-Quds day. It stresses that the commemoration of the day is “an opportunity for Muslims to renew their attachment to the third Islamic holy shrine and their refusal of the Zionist policy which seeks to obliterate the Arab and Islamic identity of the city.”³

In the populous western African state of Nigeria, one can witness the annual observation of the *Yawm al-Quds* [Quds Day] celebration. On January 22, 1999, Ma'allam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, the leader of the Islamic movement, a month after being released from more than two years' imprisonment, was barred from addressing a one-million strong Quds day rally in Zaria, northern part of the country. It was reported that a woman was killed and several others injured when police fired on people after the rally.⁴

¹ “Hizbullah on al-Quds Day: The Holy City is Alive,” *Al-Moqawama Website*, http://www.moqawama.org/v_zionis/vzion_2000/jan_zion.htm, January 2, 2000; “Hizbollah Promises Israel a Blood-Filled New Year, Iran Calls for Israel’s End,” *The Bruns International Website*, <http://www.unb.ca/bruns/9900/issue14/intnews/israel.html>, December 31, 1999.

² “Qods, Symbol of Honor and Solidarity.” Exhibition Opens in Damascus,” *The Palestine Chronicle Website*, <http://palestinechronicle.com/article.php?story=20011214163407167>, December 14, 2001.

³ “Islamic States Mark al-Quds Day,” *Arabic News Website*, <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/990518/1999051858.html>.

⁴ Ma'allam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, “Yaum al-Quds: The Day of the Oppressed,” *Muslimmedia [Crescent International Internet Edition] Website*, <http://www.muslimmedia.com/archives/features99/zak-quds.htm>, 1999; Iqbal Siddiqui, “One

In Turkey the participation of a certain Nureddin Sirin in the Quds day program in 1997 led to his conviction for 17 and a half years of imprisonment. According to his narration while in Bandirma Prison in Bahkesir, he was invited as a speaker to al-Quds Day meeting on January 31, 1997, which was part of the Ramadan activities held by Sincan municipality, a district of Ankara. Four days after the meeting, army tanks paraded through Sincan streets. The mayor of Sincan, six municipal workers and he were arrested by police and questioned. As a result, they were then arrested by Ankara state security court on February 13 of the same year and were charged of having connections with 'terrorist' organizations such as Hizbullah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. In his oral and written defense, he states,

"We are Muslims and as Muslims we take the maintenance of Al-Quds as the greatest task. We sincerely support Muslims who fight against Israel, the occupier of Palestinian Muslim territories and of Al-Quds... Israel is an illegitimate State. The real terrorist is the Zionist Israel, occupier of Palestine. Israel is a murderous regime. It is both an Islamic and a humanitarian duty to oppose the Israeli regime and support Muslim fighters who are struggling against it. The Quds Day meeting held in Sincan should be seen in this context... I also support the Islamic Republic of Iran and follow the way of Imam Khomeini, which he advised to the Muslims throughout the world... The Islamic Republic has undertaken a great task in implementing the Qur'an's edicts, defending the world Muslims, particularly in the struggle for recovering Al-Quds... Consequently, I will never renounce from the struggle for the liberation of Al-Quds and always fight against Zionism."¹

After the defense he was sentenced to 17 years and 6 months' imprisonment while having no regret in his participation in the Quds day commemoration.

Home to only about two percent of the country's Muslim populace, South Africa is a spectator of the International Quds Day commemoration every last Friday of the Muslim fasting month. During the 2001 Quds Day, thousands of people including women and children marched on the United States Embassy on Cape Town's Foreshore on December 14 afternoon to express solidarity with the people of Palestine. Although the marchers were from a variety of religious

Million Join al-Quds Rally in Zaria!" *Muslimedia*, <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/world99/quds-nige.htm>, February 1-15, 1999.

¹ "Participation in al-Quds Day Program Lands a Muslim Activist in Turkish Jail," *Muslimedia*, <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/world99/tur-quds.htm>, January 1-15, 1999. See also Iqbal Siddiqui, "Harsh Jail Terms in Turkey," *Muslimedia*, <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/world98/turkjail.htm>, November 1-15, 1997.

denominations, the march took place under the banner of the Islamic organization, *Qibla*. It was reported that other marchers were represented by People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad) and Muslims Against Global Oppression. The Pan-Africanist Congress was also conspicuous with its members carrying a huge yellow banner. In the end, a certain Achmad Cassiem of *Qibla* read out a memorandum to the large crowd assembled outside the embassy building after presenting the memorandum to the manager of the building, Frans Bouwer.¹ Meanwhile, it is also reported that a series of programs which dealt with al-Quds was broadcast the week preceding Quds Day.²

Interestingly enough, even Saddam Takriti who orchestrated and masterminded an eight-year war from 1980 to 1988 against the initiator state of the International Quds Day, in the 9th cabinet session which he chaired in February 2001 he could not help but to declare November 22³ of every year "as a national day to be called Quds Day, in which the Iraqis remember their honorable position in al-Quds Call Day in which millions of Iraqi volunteers participated in a parade to liberate Palestine."⁴

In the midst of December winter in 2001 in Great Britain, about 1,500 people attended the Quds Day protests in London on December 9. Though traditionally held on the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramadan, the demonstration introduced some innovations. Due to Christmas restrictions, the march which ended with a rally in Whitehall Place, was held early; it was moved to Sunday to accommodate members of Neturei Karta (Jews Against Zionism), who are orthodox Jews and cannot march on Saturday, the Sabbath; the march had also a large number of non-Muslim pro-Palestinian activist attendants. Rabbi Goldstein, among the most senior in the UK, journalist Faisal Bodi, and Hujjat al-Islam Shamali, a lecturer at the Islamic Center of England, addressed the rally at Whitehall Place.⁵ Speaking about the incompatibility of Jewish statehood with Judaic teachings, Rabbi Goldstein says,

¹ "‘Day of the Oppressed’ At the US Embassy," *AllAfrica Global Media Website*, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200112160008.html>, December 15, 2001; *South Africa Independent Media Center Website*, http://southafrica.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=655, December 21, 2001.

² "Radio 786 Goes International," *Radio 786 Website*, <http://www.ummah.org.uk/radio786/internat.htm>.

³ The date is November 20 in Laurie Mylroie, "Iraq and the Palestinian Conflict," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin Website*, vol. 2, no. 11, http://www.meib.org/articles/0012_ir1.htm, December 2000.

⁴ "President Saddam Hussein Chairs 9th Cabinet Session," *Uruklink Website*, <http://www.uruklink.net/eindex.htm>, February 14, 2001.

⁵ Amirah Ali, "Muslims and non-Muslims March Together in London on al-Quds Day," *Muslimmedia*, <http://www.muslimmedia.com/archives/world01/uk-march.htm>, December 16-31, 2001.

“Judaism stands completely opposed to Zionism. Zionism although founded by people of Jewish birth does not make it a Jewish conception; communism was also founded by people of Jewish birth but it is not a Jewish conception, and Zionism is no more Jewish than communism... We pray daily for the dismantlement of the Zionist state (Israel).”¹

In the United States, it is reported that a rally was organized by the CCMO, Coordinating Council of the Muslim Organizations on December 22, 2002 in the Washington Metropolitan Area. The rally started in front of the White House. Muslims gathered, made the Friday Prayers, and then marched to the U.S. State Department shouting slogans condemning Israel’s brutal actions against innocent civilians in the Holy Land. At the end of the rally, an Israeli flag, a symbol of aggression and terrorism, was burned by the people in front of the State Department.²

Quds Day in the Virtual World: Cyber-Demonstrations

When Imam Khomeini in a statement released in August 1979 [Ramadan 1399 AH] proclaimed the sanctification of the last Friday of Ramadan as International Quds Day and called on all Muslims of the world to stage demonstrations as a manifestation of unity with the Palestinian nation, the mass media—radio, TV and printed media—has played a vital role in portraying the presence of Muslims in the scene for the liberation of al-Quds. Since 1990s, thanks to the unprecedented surge of progress in the information technology as embodied by the computer and Internet, Quds Day has found the information superhighway (as a noteworthy extension of the real streets in the urban centers) as a new-found locus of protests. And in many ways access to the virtual world of the Barlovian cyberspace has provided a remarkable assistance to the marches, rallies and demonstrations in the real world.

Cyber-Demonstrations: Their Various Forms

In the Internet messages or manifestos of invitation including newsgroup messages to observe the International Quds Day are posted. There are articles featuring Quds Day. Web pages including those in the personal sites focusing on the Quds Day and related activities, such as schedule of Quds Day rallies in the

¹ “Quds Day 1422 [AH]/2001,” *Innovative Minds Website*, <http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday2001.html>.

² “The World’s Qods Day,” *Islamic City Website*, <http://www.islamic-city.com/events/events.html>, December 2000; “Rally in Front of the White House and US State Department Condemning Israel,” <http://www.islamic-city.com/qods/index.html>, December 2000.

different countries and cities, can be found. The last but not least are the news stories of events related to the observance of Quds Day demonstrations in the different parts of the world as in the foregoing pages in the websites or Internet editions of mass media.

1. Messages/Statements

In the cyberspace, messages, statements and addresses of Islamic groups and leaders of the Islamic movement on the International Quds Day are posted. A good example is the messages of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatullah Sayyid 'Ali Khamene'i, in different languages accessible in the web site of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting;¹ the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA);² and Syed Hamid Ali Shah Moosavi of the Tehreek Nafaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafariya Pakistan.³ Similarly, the addresses and speeches on Al-Quds Day of Ma'allam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky of the Islamic movement of Nigeria,⁴ Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyid Hasan Nasrullah⁵ and a certain Dr. Obada Kayali at the Canberra Islamic Centre in Australia are accessible online.⁶

Described as Jews united against Zionism, the Neturei Karta International has issued statement on al-Quds Day on November 23, 2003.⁷ The statement says,

As part of their expression of support for the Palestinian cause, representatives of Neturei Karta take part in protests, which draw attention to the Palestinian struggle, whenever they can. Therefore, on this Al-Quds Day March Neturei Karta would like to express its solidarity with the Palestinian People and explain the following points:

The ideology of Zionism is completely opposed to Judaism...

¹ "The Message of Revolution Supreme Leader in Different Languages," *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) Website*, <http://www.irib.com/worldservice/palestine/payam/jadval.htm>.

² "The International Day of Quds," *Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) Website*, <http://www.ahl-ul-bait.org/news/bayanieh/quds.htm>.

³ "Agha Syed Hamid Ali Shah Moosavi's Message on the Occasion of Al-Quds Day Himayat-e-Mazloomin," *Tehreek Nafaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafariya Pakistan Website*, <http://tnfj.org.pk/sec/msg.htm#>"AL-QUDS%20DAY%20HIMAYAT-E-MAZLOOMIN".

⁴ Ma'allam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, "Yaum al-Quds: The Day of the Oppressed," *Muslimedia International*, <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/features99/zak-quds.htm>, January 22, 1999.

⁵ "Speech by Hizbullah Leader Shaikh Nasrallah on the Palestinian Struggle," *Muslimedia International*, <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/movement03/nasr-speech.htm>, January 16-30, 2003; "The Speech of Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyid Hasan Nasrullah on the Day of Quds," *Hizbullah*, <http://www.hizbollah.tv/english/amin/k2002/k20021129.htm>; "Hezbollah Secretary General Remarks on Al-Quds International Day," *Al-Majdur*, <http://majdur.htmlplanet.com/al-Masakin/Volume%202/nasrallah.21nov03.pdf>, January 24, 2004.

⁶ Dr. Obada Kayali, "Jerusalem Al-Quds Day Address," *Avigail Abarbanel*, <http://avigail.customer.netscape.net.au/jerusalem.html>, November 30, 2002.

⁷ <http://www.nkusa.org/activities/statements/23Nov03AlQuds.cfm>.

Zionism in general and its conduct against the Palestinian People in particular is against the Torah, beliefs and the hopes of the Jewish people...

The Jewish Religious teaching is that the Jewish People have no right to rule in Palestine today...

Exile means that Jews must be loyal subjects of the government of the countries in which they live and not attempt to attain political power over other peoples...

According to the Torah and Jewish faith, the present Palestinian Arab claim to rule in Palestine is right and just...¹

2. Invitations

Along with messages of Islamic groups and their leaders, which usually contain the call for participation of the Quds Day demonstrations, there are specific invitation campaigns for Quds Day participation in the Internet. For example, a Yahoo! Newsgroup "4islam" posted a Quds Day invitation in its Message Board.²

The *Innovative Minds* has posted the 2001 Quds Day Rally details for London, Toronto, Washington, and Berlin – including the date, time, meeting point, closest underground station, contact, and additional information.³ The annual Iran's call to all Muslims and oppressed of the world for holding massive rally on the Quds Day can be read online from even non-Iranian media outlets.⁴

3. Feature articles

There are articles featuring Quds Day. See, for example, "Quds Day," *Islamic Digest Website*;⁵ Iqbal Jassat, "Quds Day: New Efforts to Ensure Israel's Survival by Madiba Poses Further Challenges," *Media Review Net*;⁶ "Al-Quds Day: A Time to Remember Martyrs" by a certain Firoz Osman at the *Media Monitors* site.⁷ The article begins:

¹ *Ibid.*

² "Subject: Observe Quds Day," *Yahoo Newsgroup 4islam Message Board*, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/4islam/message/43>.

³ <http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday.html>.

⁴ "Khatami-Quds-Rallies," *President of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, <http://president.ir/cronicnews/1379/7910/791001/791001.htm>, November 24, 2002; "Khatami Urges Iranians, World Muslims to March for Palestinian," *Payvand*, <http://www.payvand.com/news/01/dec/1025.html>, December 7, 2001; "Iran's Call for Holding Massive Rally to Support Palestinians," *People's Daily*, http://fpeng.peopledaily.com.cn/200112/14/eng20011214_86644.shtml, December 14, 2001; "President Calls for Massive Turnout in Int'l Quds Day," *President of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, <http://president.ir/cronicnews/1381/8109/810903/810903.htm>, November 24, 2002.

⁵ <http://www.islamdigest.org/articles37.htm>.

⁶ <http://www.mediareviewnet.com/Articles/alquds.htm>.

⁷ <http://world.mediamonitors.net/content/viewfull/2291>, November 19, 2003.

In mosques throughout the world, the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan has been devoted to highlight the problems facing the Palestinians in their struggle for freedom from Zionist occupation. Ever since the outbreak of the first *intifadah* (uprising) the spotlight in the Muslim world has been firmly focused on the valiant struggle being waged against the fourth most powerful country in the world – Israel.¹

Elsewhere in the article, it states:

The achievement of the Palestinians in the fourth year of the *inifadah* is remarkable. Making Israel a battleground has instilled such fear that almost a million Israelis have fled to the USA, demolishing the myth that Israel is a safe haven for Jews.²

A poem on Al-Aqsa sent to the editor of a national daily in Sri Lanka by a certain Siddiq Ghouse describes the Quds Day as follows: “The last Friday of Ramadan Muslims the world over hold as Al-Quds day, to awaken a billion souls’ conscience to noble duty and struggle in Allah’s way.” “Letters to the Editor,” *The Sunday Times Website*, January 25, 1998.³ The World Service Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) has posted the electronic version of a book on Imam Khomeini’s statements on Palestine,⁴ a chapter of which focuses on the Imam’s announcement of the holy day.⁵

4. Web pages

Many sites have also focused on the importance of the annual Quds Day such as the following: “The Worldwide Day of Quds” at the Muslim Students’ Association Website;⁶ “The Day of Qods,” Islamic Thought Foundation site;⁷ and “Al-Qods Day: The Day of Islam” posted in a Geocities personal site seemingly owned by a Lebanese student.⁸ The other pages of the site contain beautiful relevant portraits along with statements, mostly of Imam Khomeini, such as the following:

The world Qods day is the day for proclaiming commitment to accepting responsibilities for defending the honor and dignity of the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ <http://www.lacnet.org/suntimes/980125/let2.html>.

⁴ *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, Autumn 1999).

⁵ http://www.irib.ir/worldservice/imam/palestin_E/10.htm.

⁶ <http://www.msapsg.org/Quds/quds99/quds.html>.

⁷ <http://www/e-resaneh.com/Ramezan/Maghalat/English/The%20Day%20of%20Qods.htm>.

⁸ <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/quods.html>.

Muslims. The Qods day is the day of unity among Muslims and their solidarity with the innocent Palestinian nation as well as the day of the awakening of the world people's conscience.¹

The initiation of the world Qods day is a framework for preservation of unity, solidarity and active participation of Muslims for defending the Islamic holy lands and their non-submission to any form of force, insult or subservience.²

The world Qods day has helped Muslims to further strengthen their ties with the Qods ideals so that the satanic designs of the Zionist entity would be rendered futile in creating a fissure in the strong tie that exists among Muslims.³

The commemoration of the world Qods day is a means to demonstrate the Muslims' abhorrence of and anger at the Zionist usurpers who are occupying the holiest precincts of Islam.⁴

Qods could not be freed through negotiations with the usurper Zionist regime and that jihad and struggle is the only way left open for freeing the holy city of Qods.⁵

Other articles are "Qods Day" in the site of a certain Jamia Uloom-e-Islami;⁶ "Jordan-Imam Khomeini" available at the site of the Lebanese Islamic Resistance;⁷ "Al-Quds: the Focus of Muslims' Grief" at the Geocities-based *Ahlul-Bayt* Islamic Library;⁸ and "Quds Day," *Innovative Minds Website*.⁹ *Innovative Minds* site is not only active in Quds Day activities but also in Israel Boycott Campaign,¹⁰ which resulted in the closing down of its original site,¹¹ in what it describes as "Zionist terrorism in cyberspace".¹²

The Shaheed Foundation has made downloadable a series of free Al-Quds Day wallpapers on the wallpaper gallery of its site.¹³

5. News and Audio/visuals

The last but not least are the news stories of events related to the observance of Quds Day demonstrations in the different parts of the world as in

¹ <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/quods.html>.

² <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q11.html>.

³ <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q1.html>.

⁴ <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q7.html>.

⁵ <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q8.html>.

⁶ http://www.geocities.com/jamia_uloomislami/Qodsday1.htm.

⁷ <http://www.ocnsignal.com/moqawama.shtml>.

⁸ <http://www.geocities.com/ahlulbayt14/quds-grief.html>.

⁹ <http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday.html>.

¹⁰ <http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html>.

¹¹ <http://www.inminds.com>.

¹² <http://www.inminds.co.uk/inminds-newsletter-08.txt>.

¹³ <http://www.shaheedfoundation.org/wallpapergallery.asp>.

the section, *Quds Day in the Real World: Street Marches*, in the websites or Internet editions of mass media. Along with this news coverage of the street march rallies around the world are the relevant photos and audio-video clips of the rallies.

The *Innovative Minds* site has web pages that show photos with interesting captions as well as audio clips of the slogans chanted and *du'a* [supplication] recited on the 2000 and 2001 London Quds Day processions.¹ The Al-Quds Day 2002 photo report is accessible at the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHCR) and the United Islamic Students Association of Europe sites.² This is while the photo account of the 2003 march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square is featured in the sites of the anti-Zionist Jewish *Neturei Karta*³ and *Kanoon Towhid*, an apparently Iranian London-based Islamic Student Association.⁴ *Islamicdigest.net* has so far two movie clips on Quds Day: "Quds Day Special"⁵ and "Quds Day Demonstration (London) Promotion Movie."⁶

In Bahrain, an audio-visual coverage of the 2002 Quds Day rally is available at the *al-imam.net*.⁷ The Mirsta-based Zainabiya Islamic Center has displayed photos with captions of the Quds Day procession in Central Stockholm of the same year.⁸

Cyber-Demonstrations: Their Merits and Demerits

The virtual world of the cyberspace offers a variety of advantages for both individuals and groups in observing the International Quds that are unavailable or improbable in the 'meatspace'. Among its merits the following can be identified: (1) global; (2) real-time; (3) permanency; (4) virtual freedom; (5) anti-hierarchy; and (6) variety of demonstrations. Cyber-demonstrations are global in the sense that the activities and resources related to the expression of support to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination on Quds Day are lived and managed on a worldwide basis. These activities and resources do not exist within any national boundary and information therein is available worldwide. One-million-strong Quds Day marches in the main streets of Lagos (Nigeria) can be viewed by an online user in a 50-square-meter café net in Kyoto (Japan). Similarly, Quds Day

¹ <http://www.inminds.co.uk/quds2000.html>; <http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday2001.html>.

² <http://www.ihrc.org.uk/section.php?section=3&page=7>;
http://www.uisaeurope.com/Qods/page_01.htm.

³ <http://www.nkusa.org/activities/recent/london112303.cfm>.

⁴ <http://www.kanoontowhid.org/photoarchive/qudsday/quds%20day%20in%20london.htm>.

⁵ <http://www.islamicdigest.net/id5/article.php?sid=1125>.

⁶ <http://www.islamicdigest.net/id5/article.php?sid=1130>.

⁷ <http://www.al-imam.net/media/1423/qud.htm>.

⁸ http://www.zainabiya.net/mahe_ramadhan_1423_2002.htm.

march rally leaders in Bandung and Capetown can send the schedules and venues of the march rallies in Indonesia and South Africa, respectively, to a London-based web site that allocates a web page for the schedule of Quds Day activities the world over at a particular year.

Activities and resources relating to the annual Quds Day also provide real-time experience as the actions and reactions to them occur immediately with no delay. News report of a Quds Day rally in Tehran can be uploaded instantly by the reporter and thus be available online. Quds Day demonstrators passing by a café net in Beirut can be seen 'live' and their slogans heard through a web cam by Internet users around the globe.

While Quds Day is a one-day event in the real world, it is not so in the online life as the cyberspace provides a veneer of permanence to the multimedia and information items related to it. Pictures of the Quds Day demonstration in London in 2002 are still available online at the *Innovative Minds* web site,¹ among others. The circumstances surrounding the landing to jail of a Turkish Quds Day demonstrator in 1997 can still be read at the online archive of the *Crescent International*.²

If in your locality or country, demonstrations on the last Friday of Ramadan are not permitted by the government authority, the information superhighway is the right place for you. The virtual world gives you a virtual freedom to participate in the global movement of support for the world's oppressed on Quds Day demonstrations. You can express your solidarity in various ways: building a site dedicated to the Quds Day, writing and uploading a feature article, posting a message in a newsgroup where you are a member, sending email to net pals inviting or encouraging them to participate in the rally in their respective locality, or dispatching a news article on Quds Day to an electronic newspaper or newspaper with online version. If you have not seen yet a Quds Day demonstration in your city and that you wanted to know about the event and its message, the world of the computer networks called the Internet can provide you ample information.

One plus point of the cyberspace with respect to the cause of the Quds Day is its anti-hierarchical nature. The cyberspace is the space where offline hierarchy can be defied. A commoner in the 'offline' life who can merely join the march rally in his locality and has no chance to deliver a speech before his fellow marchers, can have more active participation in the 'online' sphere if he is capable enough. He can develop a personal site focused on the Quds Day, post a message

¹ <http://www.inminds.com>.

² "Participation in al-Quds Day Program Lands a Muslim Activist in Turkish Jail," *Muslimedia*, <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/world99/tur-quds.htm>, January 1-15, 1999.

and invitation, etc. He can do all of this while member of the 'offline' elite such as leader of an Islamic group who often has a central role in the march procession can't necessarily do so.

Identity fluidity, another key feature of the cyberspace, reinforces its anti-hierarchy. A person who is restricted to join the Quds Day rally in his country and to express any means of support to the Palestinian struggle can assume a different online identity or identities. In doing so, he can defy the dictate of an 'offline' elite that represents pro-Israeli interests.

Equally favorable point of the cyberspace with respect to the expression of solidarity with the Palestinians and all oppressed peoples of the world on Quds Day is the variety of demonstrations of such support that are available in the information superhighway. Depending on the online capability and accessibility of a person, he can choose any or a combination of the various forms of cyber-demonstrations as discussed above.

Notwithstanding the preceding meritorious points of the cyberspace, cyber-demonstrations are far from capable of substituting the march processions in the real world. The virtual world as the medium and space for the commemoration of the annual Quds Day has some inherent constraints. Amid the global scope of the cyberspace and the virtual freedom it offers as indicated above, the truth of the matter is that its global-ness is not so global. The cyberspace is not planetary in the sense that not everyone on the planet is involved with each global resource or activity. Although access to the Internet may be unlimited in theory, it is restricted by the cost of technology and the steep learning curve for computer neophytes.

In fact, only a small fraction of the planet's population uses cyberspace. The Internet is growing at exponential rates but is overwhelmingly located in the already industrialized world where users are wealthy, white and highly educated. In July 1997, the Internet was not only dominated by Western or developed countries but by the USA, which had 65 percent of all hosts. It was followed by Canada with 5.3 percent, Japan and the UK both with 4 percent and with no other country having more than 4 percent.¹ In relation to the Quds Day demonstrations, this accessibility restriction renders limitation of participation as well as audience to the cyber-demonstrations. While everybody can join the Quds Day marches in the real world, joining the same in the virtual world is constrained by affordability of the online life.

Behind the virtual freedom that the cyberspace provides lies the attempt of an elite minority of information-empowered people to control the production, flow

¹ John Quarterman, "Is COM Primarily US or International?" *Matrix News* 7(8) (1997), pp. 8-10.

and consumption of information. Whereas street marches and demonstrations are banned in some countries and cities around the world,¹ the cyberspace is replete with cases of censorship, filtering, spamming, and other forms of cyber control and sabotage as illustrated by the Zionists' success in closing down the former website of the *Innovative Minds*.² The issue of control in the cyberspace also demonstrates that contrary to the notion of the virtual world's anti-hierarchy, the offline elite usually constitute the online elite, too, with the exception perhaps of the case of hackers.

Similarly, the illusion of permanency of the information and resources in the Internet such as data and multimedia items can be shattered by the fact that a hyperlink can easily be changed or erased by a webmaster. A seemingly small change in the URL, or file name of a page may render electronic information inaccessible to a user.

Equally interesting to note is that cyber-demonstrations such as news reports, speeches, audio/visual items and the like do not stand by their own in the cyberspace. They are pieces of information that emerge out of the marches in the real world. News coverage and speeches at the rallies posted in the Internet are illustrious examples. Also, Quds Day is essentially and originally associated with the street marches and not to their reified forms electronic or otherwise.

In sum, the meritorious and contrary points of the cyber-demonstrations in comparison to the march processions in the street are as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Merits and demerits of the cyber-demonstrations in comparison to the street marches

Merits	Demerits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global • Real-time • Permanency • Virtual freedom • Anti-hierarchy • Variety of demonstrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitation of participation and audience • Censorship and control • Illusion of permanency

¹ http://jafariyanews.com/2k3_news/nov/17_germany.htm.

² See <http://www.inminds.co.uk/inminds-newsletter-08.txt>.

Conclusion

Consecration of the last Friday of Ramadan as International Quds Day is among the precious legacies bequeathed to us by Imam Khomeini. Since its consecration in August 1979, march demonstrations around the world has intensified every year both in terms of the scope and number of participation in the demonstrations.

With the advent of the Internet, Quds Day rallies and marches have found a new space—the cyberspace. Now, the street marches in the real world are complemented by the various forms of Quds Day demonstrations in the virtual world, which have their own particular peculiarities as well as limitations compared to the actual demonstrations.

In the cyberspace Quds Day is not only the last Friday but a never-ending real-time online happening. In other words, in the virtual world of the information superhighways everyday is Quds Day; hence, transforming International Quds Day into “International Quds Daily”. Nevertheless, given the innate constraints of the cyberspace compared to the actual march procession in the real world, substitution of the latter by the former can hardly be conceived in the foreseeable future. Instead, complementation and supplementation are the order of the day.

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