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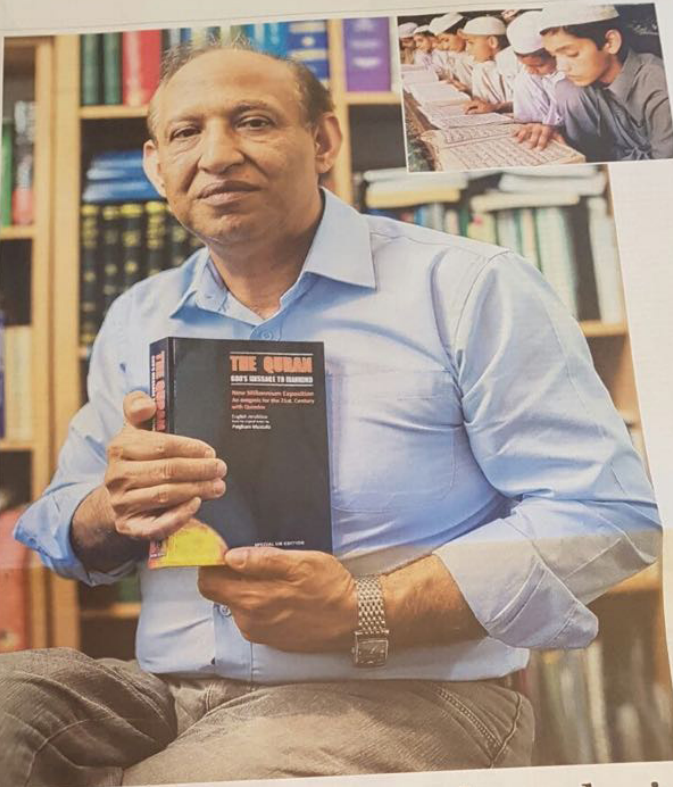
SCOTLAND

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Paigham Mustafa, the only person in Britain living with the religious edict, has come out of hiding to confront some widely held interpretations of the Koran, writes Gillian Bowditch

Paigham Mustafa may be a prophet but he is in the front line of the general, fighting a giant of war in a civil war. He is 50 years old, a father of two, and a member of the Islamic community in Glasgow. He is the only person in Britain living with the religious edict, has come out of hiding to confront some widely held interpretations of the Koran, writes Gillian Bowditch.



Mustafa's new book, *The Quran: God's Message to Mankind*, challenges the Islamic and their interpretation of the Koran he had

Glaswegian author brings his 15-year fatwa to book

In reality, it challenges the Islamic and their interpretation of the Koran he had written. Mustafa's book is an extension of his original argument that the Koran and what he believes to be the Koran and what it actually says are two different things. "From rules about food and dress, to the treatment of women, which have grown up around Islam, which have no basis in the original Koran, he argues. Instead, the peaceful and inclusive message of the original text has been hijacked over the centuries by powerful religious leaders for their own ends.

Further, I said to Deen that I didn't want any escalation. You have to suddenly withdraw from your own community. It was indescribable, really. "The death of his father a few weeks after the fatwa was issued brought the enormity of his ostracism home to him. Mustafa was the getting ready to go to the mosque for the funeral when there was a phone call to warn him off. If he attended there would be his trouble, he was warned, and so he was forced to stay away.

Why are so few educated, liberal Muslims speaking out about the misogyny and barbarism of the majority? "Because they are frightened," he says, simply. Why is he not frightened? "I'm not scared I'm not," he says. "It is serious stuff. All the things that have happened recently - the murder of Aasiya Bibi and the imam who was killed in England - do cross my mind. But I have been doing the work for so long and I know the truth. I know what I believe in. I am a believer and a humanist. I believe in the word of the Koran. This has been distorted in order to enforce views which are detrimental to society."

THE MESSAGE OF THE KORAN HAS BEEN TOTALLY SKEWED

religious hierarchy, and are indoctrinated into the youth in evening classes and weekend school, he argues. "We don't eat their food, we don't dress like them and we don't speak like them," he says of many modern Muslims. "This 'them' and its situation is being artificially created and is very dangerous, but it is difficult for people to go against the teaching of the mosque. This isn't just about culture; it's about money as well. The mosques are generating a lot of money and there is not much transparency."

argument. The message of the Koran has been totally skewed. "He says there is an underground network of Muslims globally who share his views and back his work. "There are a lot of people out there who have not spoken out because to take the first step is precarious," he says. "People will start to speak out."