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## Muslims charge media distortion

By PAUL TELLES  
Of the Emerald

The American press grossly misrepresented Islamic culture throughout the hostage crisis, Muslim students and a University professor say.

"The news media are generally satisfied with superficial presentations," says religious studies Prof. Stephen Reynolds.

Although he doesn't condone the taking of hostages, Reynolds says the press was mistaken when it explained the action as being an expression of retributive and fanatical Muslim culture.

Actually, Islam encompasses too large an area to make such generalizations possible, Reynolds says. While the taking of the hostages may have been reprehensible, it is not consistent with Islamic religion or law, he says.

"They (the militants who took the hostages) may certainly be bastards, but it's not because they're Muslims."

Islamic law is the most widely misrepresented part of Islamic culture, according to Reynolds, who says the press has overemphasized practices like beheading adulterers and cutting off the hands of thieves.

Although it is imperfect, Islamic law is not necessarily more barbaric than any other, he says.

"If you look at the Islamic world, you

see a lot of foibles. But I'm not sure they're worse than anywhere else," he says, noting that the humanity of the American legal system also is arguable.

While corporal punishments sometimes are required in Islamic countries, they are a small part of Islamic law, he says.

"A great deal of the Islamic legal system is intended for what we also regard as humanitarian ends," says Reynolds, who teaches a course in Islamic religion.

For instance, Islamic law requires Muslims to pay a tax to the poor, called a zakat, in order to promote a fair distribution of wealth. Muslims also equalize the rich and poor during the yearly feast of Ramadan when they fast during daylight hours, Reynolds says.

Rather than promote retributive justice, Islamic law frequently has supplanted systems of law based on clan revenge, he adds.

Muslim students agree the press has taken the sometimes-gruesome punishments out of the context of Islamic society.

"Islamic law isn't a code of punishment," says Aziz, a Saudi Arabian member of the Muslim Students Association. "It (the punishment) is the last resort to put things in their right places."

Like Reynolds, Aziz emphasizes the humanitarian aspects of Islamic law. For

instance, he says Islamic law deals less harshly with people who commit crimes of necessity than with criminals whose acts are wanton.

However, "if a person does something like this (commits an anti-social crime), Islam says there is no way but to get rid of the enemy" for the collective good of society, he says.

Although punishments like beheading and dismemberment seem exceedingly cruel to westerners, it is important to put them in the proper perspective, both Reynolds and the students say.

Ahmed Altwajri, also a Saudi Arabian, points out capital punishment is being revived in America.

"It's really just a contradiction," Altwajri says. "If people are directly affected, they are all for capital punishment. Once they're away from it, they philosophize."

Americans frequently fail to see this similarity because they mistake modernization for civilization and believe they are more civilized because their technology is more efficient, Aziz says.

"To me, civilization first is developing the mentality and the personality of the individual," he says. "If you only improve your tools, you aren't civilized, you're modernized."

Like many aspects of Third-World culture, Islamic law is facing massive read-

justment problems caused by hurried modernization, Reynolds says.

"There's going to be some obvious need for some body of law which might not be the traditional basis of Islamic law, but which will be complementary to it."

The students blame the misrepresentation of Islamic culture on a conspiracy between the press and wealthy Americans like David Rockefeller, chairman of the board of the Chase-Manhattan bank, but Reynolds doesn't agree.

"I think they (Rockefeller, the multinational corporations and the Trilateral Commission) try to arouse the emotions of the American people to justify any action they take against Third World countries," Aziz says.

Reynolds, however, blames the situation on in-group thinking and ethnocentric education.

Journalists come to an arbitrary consensus on some issue and then "find ways of defending their opinions against any contrary evidence," he says.

Also, the American educational system doesn't prepare journalists or anyone else for contacts with other cultures, he says.

But this doesn't absolve American journalists from responsibility for the misrepresentation of Islamic culture and law during the past 14 months, he says.

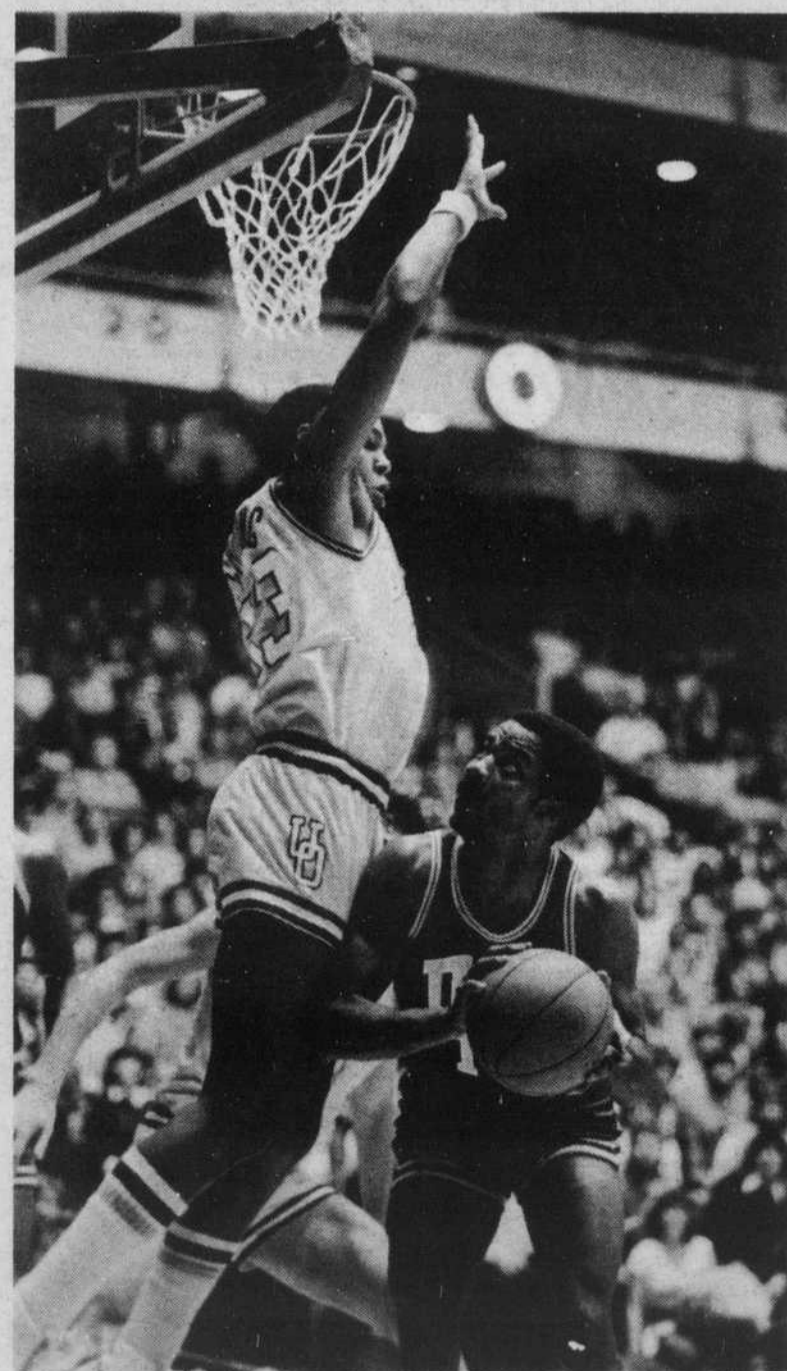


Photo by Steve Dykes

Barry Brooks (with ball) and his USC teammates found the route to the basket plugged by Ducks, like Ray Whiting (above), as Oregon made it two straight Thursday with a convincing 74-67 win over the Trojans. Story on Page 8.

## 'Blown out of proportion'

### Students say anger justified

By HARRY ESTEVE  
Of the Emerald

Not everyone feels sorry for the 52 Americans recently released from captivity in Iran.

About 50 people attended a two-hour "teach-in" Thursday night in the EMU on the media coverage of the hostage crisis.

The majority of the crowd was either Iranian students or American Marxists who condemned the roles of the press and the U.S. and Iranian governments in handling the hostage situation.

The Iranian Student Association sponsored the meeting.

At the end of the teach-in one message was clear: Few who attended had much — if any — sympathy for the 52 freed hostages.

Amin, an Iranian student who chaired the meeting, called the initial hostage taking "justified."

"The Iranian people had every reason to be angry" 14 months ago when the 52 Americans were taken hostage, Amin said. "They protested, and that's what happened."

The media, he said, "has blown the whole situation way out of proportion."

Amin said he organized the "teach-in" because he thought the media waged a "tremendous promotion against the Iranian people," when news of Iranian brutality accompanied the release of the hostages.

The media "manipulated the American people," he said, ad-



Photo by Martha Stanton

University Iranian students Amin (left) and Tooraj led a "teach-in" Thursday night on media coverage of the hostage crisis.

ding that the repeated scenes of militant Iranians burning the American flag were designed to provoke anger against all Iranians.

"Now that the Americans have returned, there is another provocation," Amin said. "(Reports of) torture and mistreatment have been blown out of proportion."

Most of the audience agreed with him. Tooraj, another Iranian student who organized the meeting, claimed the U.S. media ignored reports that Americans were tortured in Iran during the Shah's regime.

"They tried to make a spectacle of the situation," he said about coverage of the hostage crisis, "like a football game."

"Both sides used us," he said referring to U.S. and Iran governments. "They played with our emotions."

Marty Heiser, a University so-

phomore, drew boos and laughter from the crowd when he said, "The Iranian people should apologize to the American people."

"I may be a victim of 'imperialist propaganda,'" he said, referring to several comments made earlier, "but I watched on TV an Iranian stabbing the charred remains of an American serviceman who was sent to rescue the hostages."

"As an American, it bothers me that you are trying to justify that."

Another Iranian student, Firooz, said Americans should have supported the hostage-taking.

"American people believe in freedom," he said. "The hostage crisis is a consequence of people who love freedom. People who love freedom have to support the action."