

# Edinburgh Festival 2016

## Alwaleed Centre Selections

With the festival season fast approaching, the Alwaleed Centre has compiled a list of events which may appeal to those with an interest in Islam. Some events are very specifically related to Islam, whilst others explore themes more loosely related to the 'World of Islam' in both contemporary and historical contexts. These include the migration crisis, issues related to the Middle East, Pakistan and West Africa, as well as topics such as gender empowerment and marginalisation. All events are listed in chronological order per festival. We hope you enjoy the festival season and please do share any of your reviews with us!

**Edinburgh International Film Festival (15-26 June):** [www.edfilmfest.org.uk](http://www.edfilmfest.org.uk)

### **Sand storm**

*Friday 17 June 18:15 OR Sunday 19 June, 20:45*

As surprising as it is illuminating, this award-winning drama is a truly engrossing depiction of life in a Bedouin village through the eyes of Layla, a young college student torn between powerful family traditions and a keen determination to find her own place in the world. Strong performances and authentic locations transport us seamlessly to another world, where Layla is not the only family member forced to reconsider their unwavering loyalty to village conventions. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Halal Love (and sex)**

*Sunday 19 June 18:05 OR Saturday 25 June, 15:45*

A charmingly frothy and funny romantic comedy (or perhaps it should be titled 'Beirut, Actually' as ScreenDaily's reviewer commented) that follows the traditions of the romantic comedy genre to great effect as it charts how three couples tackle romance within Islamic strictures. From a very funny sex education lesson (apparently 'worms' make babies) through to a wife tired by her husband's nightly demands (who seeks to get him another wife to ease the sexual workload), it's a funny and heart-warming film. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Twice upon a Time**

*20 June 20:50 OR 22 June, 16:00*

Director Niam Itani fled with her family from Beirut to Ghazze in 1989, seeking refuge from the Lebanese Civil War. Despite living in poverty, Itani describes her childhood years in Ghazze as 'the best days of my life', as families lived in solidarity. Connecting with Khalil, a young Syrian refugee in Ghazze in 2012, Itani has created a film of profound sensitivity, chronicling the effects of trauma past and present, and their shared hopes for the future. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Avalanche**

*Saturday 25 June 13:20 OR Sunday 26 June, 18:05*

Highly respected senior nurse Homa (played with admirable restraint by Iranian acting legend Fatemeh Motamed Aria, hailed by some as the 'Meryl Streep of Iran') is offered a 10-day long night shift caring for a single patient. There is constant heavy snow during this period, with the oppressive atmosphere (and hints of impending drama - the 'Avalanche' of the title) that permeates both her work and home life as insomnia encroaches. Elegantly performed with the moments of quiet stillness adding much to the underlying sense of intensity. [MORE INFO.](#)



### **The Dream of Shahrazad**

*Thursday 30 June, 18:30, 50 George Square, FREE and no reservation required.*

This unique music-led film looks at recent political events in Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon through the lens of the famous story collection known as One Thousand and One Nights. The film uses the metaphor of Shahrazad - the princess in the Nights who saves lives by telling stories to the murderous Sultan Shahrivar. It is filmed before, during and after the Arab Spring uprisings and weaves together a web of music, politics and storytelling to explore the ways in which creativity and political articulation coincide in response to oppression. Screened in partnership with the Just Festival and the Alwaleed Centre. [MORE INFO.](#)

**Edinburgh International Fringe Festival (1-29 August):** [www.tickets.edfringe.com](http://www.tickets.edfringe.com)

### **Ali Hassan: Man Interrupted (Work in Progress)**

As a father of four, Ali is well versed in dodging difficult questions or just making up the answers. But when his kids start to ask about religion in general and Islam in particular, Ali begins to consider his Muslim heritage. In his first appearance at the Fringe, Ali delivers a biting funny work in progress on flunking out of Sunday school, asking unanswerable questions, and being a cultural but not a religious Muslim. 'A gifted stand-up comic' (Montreal Gazette). [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Aatif Nawaz: Aatificial Intelligence**

Aatif follows up his acclaimed Muslims Do it 5 Times a Day show with a loud and hilarious assault on irresponsible journalism. 'A man with big ambitions - this is brave, important comedy' (ThreeWeeks). 'Side-splittingly hilarious' (EdFringeReview.com). 'You will laugh until it hurts' (MumbleComedy.net). 'A fine gag comedian who excels at interacting with the crowd' (Spiked-Online.com). [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Bilal Zafar: Cakes**

Cakes is the highly anticipated debut show from Bilal Zafar, the Hackney Empire New Comedian of the Year 2016 (NATYS) and Leicester Square Theatre New Comedian of the Year runner-up. Join Bilal as he takes you on a fascinating and hilarious journey of how he was mistaken for a Muslim-only cake shop and became a prime target for the furious far right around the world. 'Relaxed, knowing, skilful' (Steve Bennett, Chortle.co.uk). 'Instantly engaging' (BBC.co.uk). 'Impressive!' (Londonist.com). [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Here's Some Black for the Union Jack**

British-Arab Ella has spent the last few years passing as white: National Geographic Explorer, 'Achingly funny' (LooseLips.com). Ivorian Trev has spent the last few years intimidating Africans with his blackness: 'Clever and funny' (Tony Law), 'Has the best humour' (BroadwayBaby.com). They're living the dream, concerned about the weather! [MORE INFO.](#)

### **The Blue Box: Memories of the Children of War**

'This is my Blue Box. In it, I put my memories. Now, I'm giving it to you.' Performed by the multicultural company that brought Antigone: An Arabian Tragedy from Kuwait to the 2015 Fringe, this bilingual English/Arabic production explores different perspectives of war in the Middle East through the stories of children found in The Blue Box. Based on the book by teenage author Emma Abdullah and devised for the stage by Alison Shan Price, this production is graciously sponsored by Alghanim Industries, JAMM Art Advisory and the DAI Cultural Centre. [MORE INFO.](#)



### Let Extremists Speak?

In the name of safeguarding and security, British counter-terrorism legislation is becoming increasingly restrictive of expression that is deemed to support 'non-violent extremism'. This restriction of expression seems counter-intuitive to some of our most cherished British liberal values. Researcher Khadijah Elshayyal asks: Can we justify the restriction of free speech and talk about promoting 'British values' at the same time? Is restrictive legislation the best approach to tackling the threat of radicalisation in our communities? And, come to that, when did 'radical' become such a dirty word? Part of the Caberet of Dangerous Ideas at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. [MORE INFO.](#)

Edinburgh International Festival events (5-29 August): [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk)

### Senegalese Music Sensation: Youssou N'Dour

Wednesday 24 of August, 20:00.

Youssou N'Dour is almost certainly the greatest figure in African music. He has been mesmerising audiences for more than three decades with his unmistakable soaring tenor, mixing Senegal's ancient traditions with eclectic world influences from Cuban rumba to hip-hop, jazz and soul. He produces explosive music of joy, reverence and enormous emotional power that sings of Africa's Identity, heritage and hopes. [MORE INFO.](#)

Edinburgh International Book Festival (13-29 August): [www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk)

### Adam Mars-Jones & Hisham Matar - Father and Sons

Saturday 13 August, 16:00.

Two critically acclaimed novelists join us to discuss memoirs about their fathers. In *Kid Gloves*, Adam Mars-Jones describes life with a formidable high-court judge who felt like a stranger until the two were thrown together toward the end of his father's life. Hisham Matar's *The Return* reflects on his search for a father kidnapped and imprisoned in Libya many years before. Both books are tender and quietly heartbreaking. Chaired by Jane Fowler. [MORE INFO.](#)

### Shirin Ebadi - My fight for Human Rights

Saturday 13 August, 17:30.

The first Muslim woman and first Iranian to win a Nobel Peace Prize, Shirin Ebadi is a leading lawyer and activist who has campaigned fearlessly for freedom of speech and equality before the law in her country, despite being betrayed politically and personally, and forced into exile from Iran. She joins us to discuss *Until We Are Free*, her account of the fight for dignity, human rights and Iranian reform. [MORE INFO.](#)

### Sarah Ardizzone & Faïza Guène - Vibrant Voices of Paris

Sunday 14 August, 18:30.

To call her character the 'Bridget Jones of the banlieues' (as *Elle* magazine did) is to misrepresent the political subtlety and bittersweet cultural insights of Faïza Guène's novels on life in the Parisian suburbs for its French-Algerian communities. Thus proving how the qualities of novels can be lost in translation if not for the talents of translators like Sarah Ardizzone. Guène is joined by Ardizzone to discuss new novel *Men Don't Cry*. [MORE INFO.](#)



### **Alpha - The Man Who Hoped For a Better Life**

*Saturday 13 August, 20:00.*

Barroux presents the world première performance of Alpha, a son-et-lumière dramatic realisation of his powerful graphic novel, launched here in the English language for the first time. With translator Sarah Ardizzone and actor Thierry Lawson, Barroux tells the story of a West African migrant who leaves Mali to find his family in France. Thus unfolds a tragic, unforgettable tale about the hopes and perils of migration. Musical supervision by Carole Mendy. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Zaffar Kunial with Jackie Kay**

*Monday 15 August, 15:15.*

What does it mean to be a British writer of mixed heritage in the 21st century? Jackie Kay was born to a Scottish mother and Nigerian father, while Zaffar Kunial was born to an English mother and a Kashmiri father. Kunial, whose first collection of verse was published in 2014, draws heavily on his rich Anglo-Asian cultural heritage, and writes of 'the legacy of exchanging words across the centuries'. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Alaa Al Aswany - Egypt: A Devastating Portrait**

*Monday 15 August, 10:15.*

In 2002, *The Yacoubian Building* was an international bestseller, establishing Alaa Al Aswany as one of the Arab world's most influential voices. Since then, Egypt has changed radically. However, Al Aswany's new novel *The Automobile Club of Egypt* represents another satire on his country's modern situation. Today he discusses his book and freedom of speech in a post-2011 Egypt whose government has tried to silence him. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Walter Reid - The British Betrayal of India**

*Wednesday 17 August, 11:00.*

Acclaimed author of military and political history, Walter Reid takes a dim view of Britain's role in India after the Second World War. In *Keeping the Jewel in the Crown*, he uncovers a wealth of evidence to suggest that far from easing the passage to independence, Britain held back India's progress, leading to chaos in 1947, and repercussions that are still being felt today. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Tahmima Anam & Helen Sedgwick - A Meeting of Minds**

*Wednesday 17 August, 15:45.*

Stories about strangers connecting are at the heart of two hotly anticipated novels. Granta Best Young British Novelist Tahmima Anam's *The Bones of Grace* features the adopted daughter of a Dhaka family meeting a man who belongs to a typical American family. Scottish writer Helen Sedgwick's assured debut, *The Comet Seekers*, sees two people driven by a desire to explore come together at an Antarctic research station. Chaired by Kirsty Logan. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Raja Alem & Abir Mukherjee - Death in Mecca, Death in Calcutta**

*Wednesday 17 August, 20:30.*

Winner of the 2011 International Prize for Arabic Fiction, Raja Alem is an exciting new voice in Arabic literature. In *The Dove's Necklace* she describes the customs of Mecca from the intriguing perspective of a female Saudi author. Abir Mukherjee spent most of his childhood in Glasgow, but his award-winning Calcutta-set crime novel *A Rising Man* is an evocative portrait of India and the dark underbelly of British Raj. Chaired by Daniel Hahn. [MORE INFO.](#)



### **Leila Al-Shami & Robin Yassin-Kassab - How We're Failing Syria**

*Thursday 18 August, 11:00.*

Five years since Syrians took to the streets to demand the overthrow of the Assad regime, Syria has become the home of ISIS, and the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War. Robin Yassin-Kassab, a media commentator on Syria, and Leila Al-Shami, co-founder of a network that connects anti-authoritarian struggles across the Middle East, have together written *Burning Country*, a grassroots perspective on the Syrian opposition movement. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Jack Shenker - Egypt's Revolution**

*Thursday 18 August, 12:15.*

Five years after Tahrir Square was rocked by the Arab Spring uprising, what has happened to democracy and social justice in Egypt? Former Egypt correspondent for the Guardian, Jack Shenker presents *The Egyptians*, a book described by Noam Chomsky as 'a remarkable piece of work.' Historically informed and politically shrewd, this is the definitive guide to the upheavals in a volatile nation. Chaired by the Economist books and arts editor Fiammetta Rocco. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Mostafa Salameh - The Muslim Mountaineer**

*Thursday 18 August, 14:15.*

The son of Palestinian refugees, Mostafa Salameh spent his student days in Edinburgh and had a life-changing experience. One night Mostafa dreamt he was on Mount Everest reciting the call to prayer. He set out to fulfil that dream and has since scaled seven of the highest peaks in the world. A devout Muslim, committed to spreading the message of tolerant Islam, he shares his remarkable story in a new book, *Dreams of a Refugee*. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **A Top Comedian Comes of Age**

*Thursday 18 August, 15:45.*

UK-Iranian Shappi Khorsandi is a star of stand-up who has mined her comic talent to unearth a witty, sometimes shocking debut novel. *Nina is Not OK* is a coming-of-age drama about a young teenage girl battling her addictions: it's a book that should appeal to fans of Caitlin Moran. What tempted Khorsandi to shift from making people laugh in public to working on the grand scale of longform fiction? [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Ben Rawlence - The World's Largest Refugee Camp**

*Friday 19 August, 10:30.*

Dadaab Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya has existed for 25 years. Originally created for 90,000 Somali refugees it now contains over 350,000 people, including 10,000 third-generation inhabitants. Over a period of four years, Ben Rawlence explored this extraordinary 'temporary' city, getting close to the realities of life for its inhabitants. *City of Thorns* takes us beyond the shock headlines, offering testament to the frailty and resilience of humanity. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Nada Awar Jarrar & Ghassan Zaqtan - Loss and the Scars of War**

*Friday 19 August, 19:00.*

We're honoured to present two authors offering personal reflections on the experiences of people displaced by war. Respected Lebanese novelist Nada Awar Jarrar discusses *An Unsafe Haven*, in which a woman's world is deeply affected by an encounter with a Syrian refugee. Celebrated Palestinian poet Ghassan Zaqtan presents his novella describing the Past - a tale of childhood set in a hotbed of Palestinian resistance, the Karameh Refugee Camp. [MORE INFO.](#)



### **Ben Ehrenreich & Yasir Suleiman - Palestinians' Quest for Freedom**

*Sunday 21 August, 12:30.*

Life in the Occupied Territories is frustrating and often humiliating. Ben Ehrenreich's *The Way to the Spring* is a searing, game-changing account of reality in the West Bank, and a furious, provocative testament to the futility of occupation. He is joined by Yasir Suleiman, whose touching book *Being Palestinian* presents over 100 testimonies from Palestinians of all backgrounds.

[MORE INFO.](#)

### **Ahmed al-Malik & Raphael Cormack - Complex, Curious Khartoum**

*Sunday 21 August, 15:30.*

The Nile-straddling Sudanese capital Khartoum has long been a focal point for imperialism and rebellion. This boisterous but resolutely Arabic city is explored in a new anthology, *The Book of Khartoum*, featuring ten award-winning writers from Sudan. Expert in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies from Edinburgh University, Raphael Cormack is co-editor of the book, and he's joined today by contributor Ahmed al-Malik. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Harry Parker & Nadim Safdar - Soldiers: Objects of War**

*Wednesday 24 August, 14:00.*

It's said that badly war-wounded soldiers feel like little more than objects, and Harry Parker cleverly articulates this in his innovative debut novel, *Anatomy of a Soldier*. Nadim Safdar's novel, *Akram's War*, is an account of a radicalised British soldier on the verge of detonating a suicide bomb. Both paint timely, unflinching portraits of Britain and the human cost of the 'war on terror'.

[MORE INFO.](#)

### **Amira K Bennison - Islam in the Mediterranean**

*Thursday 25 August, 14:15.*

The rich and complex history of Islam has many facets, but few Islamic empires have had quite such an influence on European history as the two Berber dynasties from the Maghreb that ruled much of southern Spain and north Africa between the 10th and 13th centuries. Cambridge University's Amira K Bennison presents *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, the first book in English that explores their influence and lasting impact. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Ben Judah & Rowan Moore - London: Capital of Elsewhere**

*Friday 26 August, 14:00.*

The migrant population of London has topped three million. It has become flooded with international money as well as foreigners rich and poor. Foreign correspondent Ben Judah in *This is London*, and Observer Architecture critic Rowan Moore in *Slow Burn City*, chart the changes in these compulsive, thought-provoking non-fiction books. Every international city could learn much from their lucid and compassionate ideas. Chaired by Sarfraz Manzoor. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Reimagining Islamic Fables and Scottish Myths**

*Saturday 27 August, 12:15.*

Two illustrators from different cultural backgrounds reimagine ancient stories. Kate Leiper has illustrated a number of traditional Scottish tales, and recently worked in Pakistan as part of a Book Festival/Highlight Arts residency. Iranian author-illustrator Marjan Vafaian's *The Parrot and the Merchant*, re-explores a tale by 13th century Islamic philosopher Rumi. Find out what it's like to bring old stories back to life. Sponsored and supported by the Alwaleed Centre. [MORE INFO.](#)



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### **Tahar Ben Jelloun & Irenosen Okojie - The Mother of all Stories**

Sunday 28 August, 12:30.

Tahar Ben Jelloun, Morocco's greatest living author, presents a compelling novelisation of his mother's life, newly translated into English. *About My Mother* beautifully and tenderly tells the story of her descent into dementia. Meanwhile, Irenosen Okojie's *Butterfly Fish* is an astonishingly assured debut novel about a mother whose death leaves a striking legacy and a route into the history of Nigeria and ancient Benin. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Amnesty International Imprisoned Writers Series - Iran: No Freedom for Expression**

Sunday 28 August, 17:30.

Iran's authorities have severely curtailed the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Journalists are imprisoned along with human rights defenders and others who voice dissent. At the time of writing, Atena Farghadani languishes in prison. Her crime? Illustrating a cartoon deemed to be critical of the government. Authors reading on the subject today include Peter Arnott, Ragnar Jónasson and Irenosen Okojie. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Sara Khan - Can reason conquer extremism?**

Sunday 28 August, 18:45.

Human rights campaigner and one of Woman's Hour Top Ten Influencers of 2015, Sara Khan has spent two decades fighting for tolerance and equal rights within Muslim communities. In *The Battle for British Islam*, she writes of the young men and women who have been radicalised and talks today about how the cycle of extremism can be broken without further alienating UK Muslims. Chaired by Sarfraz Manzoor. [MORE INFO.](#)

### **Kader Abdolah - The Life of Muhammad**

Monday 29th August, 17:45.

Having fled Iran to escape the Ayatollah and Islamic fundamentalism, novelist Kader Abdolah settled in the Netherlands. From that safe distance he began enquiring into the true meanings of the Qur'an, and is now an acclaimed author. In *The Messenger: A Tale Retold*, he portrays the Prophet and his followers in distinctly human ways, thus underlining Abdolah's main desire: to build bridges between east and west. [MORE INFO.](#)

**Just Festival (5-28 August):** [www.just-festival.org](http://www.just-festival.org)

### **Art Behind the Barrier**

Monday 8 August, 19:30.

What is life like for artists working in the West Bank? Do the constraints of daily living, mixed with the environment of fear and uncertainty, constrain artistic creativity, or is conflict at the core of all great artistic pieces? Join us to discuss this fascinating topic, with panellists who have all experienced creating art under the shadow of the West Bank's barrier. Chair: Phil Chetwynd (Network of Photographers for Palestine) Panelists: Ava Hunt Actor/Playwright), Liz Lohead (Poet/Playwright), Zoe Lafferty (Jenin Freedom Theatre). [MORE INFO.](#)



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## Views from the Edge

Tuesday 9 August, 19:30.

Should all ideas that sit at the edge of society be allowed a public platform, no matter how controversial or unacceptable they are? Is that better than compromising freedom of speech - considered a cornerstone of our society? These questions have been recently raised in public consciousness by the Westminster Government's Prevent Strategy, which aims to prevent religious Radicalisation through confronting extremist ideology. Our panel will discuss whether human rights are currently being impinged through the enacting of censorship. Chair: Professor Jo Shaw (University of Edinburgh). Panellists: Peter Tatchell (Campaigner/Journalist), Carol Young (Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights), Gavin Douglas (University of Edinburgh), Rev Dr Harriet Harris (University of Edinburgh). [MORE INFO](#).

## The Displacement Dilemma

Friday 12 August, 19:30.

The global migration crisis is arguably one of the biggest concerns of our time. War, poverty and disaster are causing millions of people around the world to flee their homes. 17 years is now the average length of time that someone is displaced. It is little wonder that lives are interrupted, education stops and a generation is on the brink of being lost. But, not all people who flee are welcome. Chair: David Pratt (Sunday Herald). Panellists: Lewis Hetherington (Playwright), Michael McKean (Mercy Corps). [MORE INFO](#).

## Acting Alone

Various dates.

Acting Alone is inspired by the people actress Ava Hunt met in refugee camps in Palestine. In her unique performance style, Ava weaves together stories of immense complexity and fragile humanity with tales of her often funny and occasionally bizarre experiences of working as an actor and performing alone. Heart-breaking, witty and confronting, Acting Alone asks questions of us all - can one person make a difference? And what are we willing to risk? [MORE INFO](#).

## Al-Rowwad: Beautiful Resistance

Tuesday 16 August, 18:00.

Beautiful Resistance promotes human rights through creative and non-violent responses to the contemporary situation in Palestine. Meet Dr Abdelfattah Abusrour, founder of the Beautiful Resistance and architect of Alrowwad Cultural Association in Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem. Using art, dance, music and film to break the cycle of violence experienced by young people on a daily basis, Al-Rowwad promotes recovery from trauma, builds resilience and hope, and preserves the dignity of those living with the violence and uncertainty of life in Palestine. Hear Dr Abusrour's story and savour traditional dabka dance and song performed by Alrowwad's artists. [MORE INFO](#).

**Free Festival (4-28 August):** [www.freefestival.co.uk](http://www.freefestival.co.uk)

## Ahir Shah: Machines

Philosophical stand-up Ahir Shah combines questing polemic with hella sweet gags in Machines: an hour of comedy about democracy, technology, internationalism, terrorism, history, modernity, utopia and lizards. It's both funny and good. Shah's last show, Distant, was performed to critical and popular acclaim at the 2015 Edinburgh Fringe, and subsequently toured around the UK, Paris and Australia. He is very rarely on television or radio, which is a shame really. The venue is centrally located. The show is free. Nice. 'Passionate, poetic, powerfully funny' \*\*\*\* (List). 'A potent and articulate comic voice' \*\*\*\* (Scotsman). 'Excellent' \*\*\*\* (Guardian). [MORE INFO](#).

