

## Fake prophetess: How a lady fooled the Muslim leaders

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(Edited text of an article originally published at <http://www.viewpointonline.net/fake-prophetess.html>)

During the general elections of 1970, when the Pakistani army realized that the Awami League of Bangla Desh (East Pakistan at that time) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of Bhutto, from West Pakistan were attracting people, with no other party able to draw even 5000 supporters to its rallies, they imported Zohra Fona, a woman from Indonesia, apparently pregnant with Imam Mehdi. Zohra Fona claimed that the child in her womb recited the Azaan, the Muslim call to prayer. Ulema (religious scholars) like Maulana Okarvi and Ehtesham Ul Haque went to see Zohra Fona and listened to the Azaan with their ears close to the lady's womb.



Today, the military establishment has brought a new male Zohra Fona with the name of Zaid Hamid, who calls himself a defence analyst and preaches Jihad against USA, NATO and India, and says one day the Islamic forces will capture all these infidel countries. He can be seen on different television talk shows making his speeches. People like Zaid Hamid are said to be the best people and real lovers of our religion. But our past tells that they cannot survive for long.

The 1970s general election provides a parallel. At that time President Yahya Khan and his cabinet wanted to make sure that religious groups won. The media, particularly the Jang group and its publication *Akhbar-e-Jahan*, issued polls predicting that Jamat-e-Islami and the Pakistan Muslim League Council would win the election. The Awami League of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman would come in third, followed by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in fourth or fifth place.

To support the Islamic movement, Mr. Mian Tufail Mohammad of Jamat-e-Islami and Nawabzada Sher Ali Khan, then minister of information in the military cabinet, stated that Pakistan was created on the basis of Islamic ideology. This is how the 'Ideology of Pakistan' was born. This ideology translated into the now famous slogan, "Pakistan ka mutlab Kia la ilaha ilallah" (What Pakistan stands for: There is no God but one).

Most of the time when he was awake, Yahya Khan was drunk. Nonetheless, he was portrayed by the Islamists as a genuine and brave Muslim leader. This can be verified by checking the newspapers back then, particularly the *Jang*.

When the Pakistani army and bureaucratic establishment realized that Mujib-ur-Rehman's Awami League and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's PPP were attracting people, they imported Indonesian Zohra Fona, apparently pregnant with Imam Mehdi. It was propagated that she had visited several Islamic countries, and had led the rulers in prayer (despite a woman not being able to do this according to traditional Islamic thought).

Many Muslim intellectuals and scholars claimed through their writings and lectures that the time for Imam Mehdi's (the 'Guided One', the prophesied redeemer of Islam who would unite the Muslim world and eliminate tyranny and injustice) had come. A new Islamic world was about to emerge. During this period, the Islamic parties including Jamat-e-Islami, perpetrated violence. Members started attacking liberal and progressive professors, doctors, writers, journalists as well as their houses. They also burned many libraries and collections of books.

Zohra Fona claimed that the child in her womb recited the Azaan and could lead the prayers. Ulema like Maulana Okarvi and Ehtesham Ul Haque went to see Zohra Fona and listened to the Azaan with their ears close to her womb. Prayer events were arranged for her in open places as well as in the larger mosques, and the Ulema would pray behind her. She would stretch her legs towards Mecca, directing her womb toward the pulpit. Suddenly the Azaan would start coming from her womb or from another private part. The Ulema were so shameless that they offered prayers while focusing their eyes on her private parts.

Back then the left was very organized, so it was difficult to explain this farce. Finally the Pakistan Medical Association and doctors at Jinnah Hospital, Karachi decided to unearth the drama. Several lady gynecologists were asked to help; they knew that this kind of thing could not happen. But Zohra Fona was very clever. Whenever doctors were pursuing her for a medical examination, she avoided them with the help of the Pakistani security forces. But one day, when she was unable to escape, the doctors of Jinnah hospital conducted an examination, recovering a small tape recorder from her womb.

The drama was over, but the doctors were branded as communists. Meanwhile, Zohra Fona immediately left the same night for India, and directly traveled on to Indonesia.

This is a true story, and one day we will find another story for Zaid Hamid. I appreciate that Hamid gives good entertainment whenever he appears for 20-30 minutes on the screen. I believe he is a patient with high blood pressure, and may be suffering from schizophrenia. But I would not ask doctors to examine him as they did Zohra Fona. Who knows what would come out of his skull?