

Health disparities and social injustices among Malaysia's forced migrant population

Islamic Ethics and Justice

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7 December 2025





A medical doctor, an advocate and a Muslim woman.

Background

Location and
high numbers
of influx

Malaysia is a
Muslim
country

Non-signatory
of 1951
Refugee
Convention

>60% HCW
are Muslims

Sociopolitical determinants and barriers to Healthcare



Financial
barriers and
high medical
costs



Hesitancy of
healthcare
providers



Language and
communication
obstacles



Fear of arrest
during hospital
visits

Health Disparities

Manifestations through the lens of social injustice



Structural exclusion
from healthcare



Unequal treatment
despite need



Erosion of dignity
and duty of care



Amal Muhajir Clinic





Amal Muhajir Dental Clinic



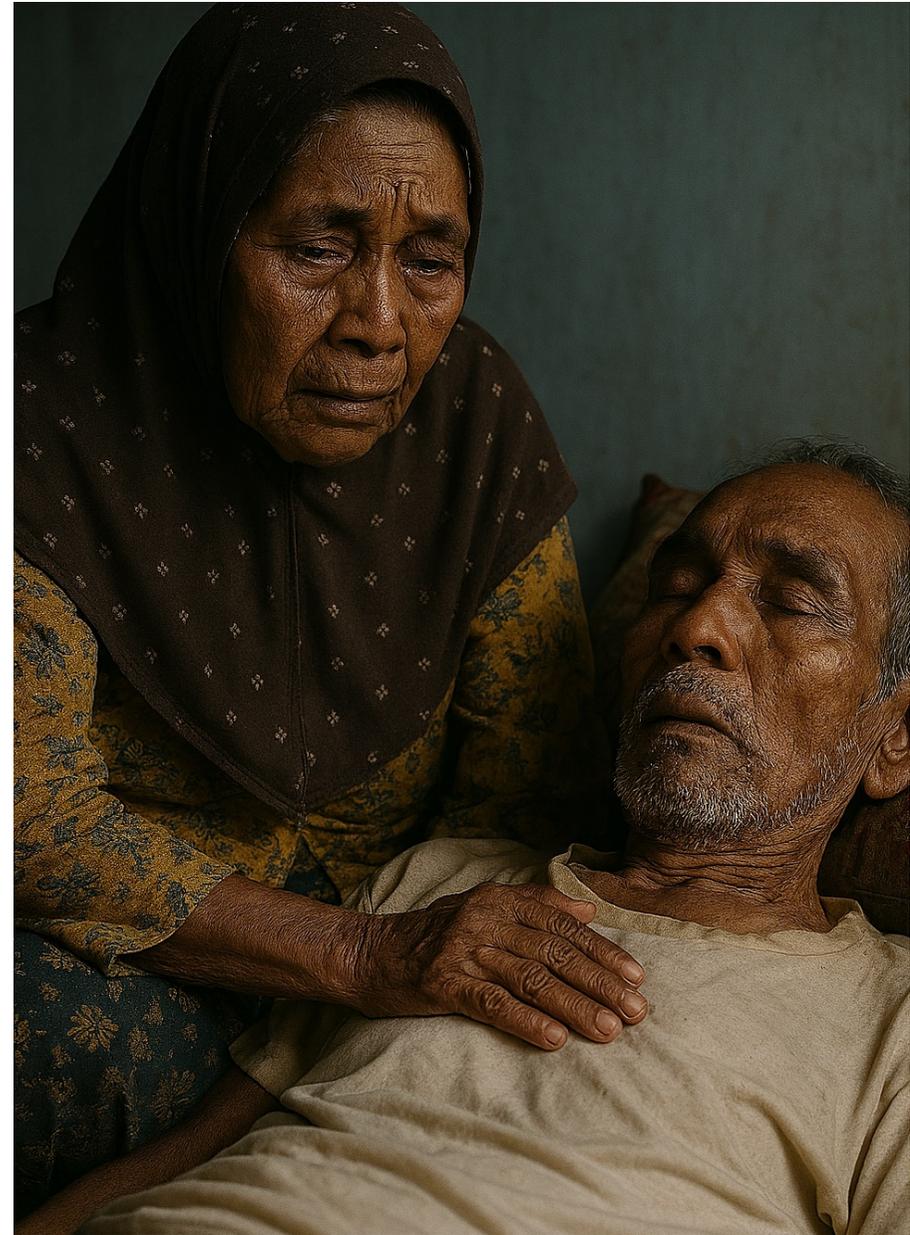
Research Aim

To explore how the principles of Islamic justice can inform more compassionate, rights-based practices within Malaysia's healthcare system.

Case Study 1

Madame Ros, a 58-year-old Rohingya widow, lost her husband to myocardial infarction and, with no income, moved between three homes for shelter.

A year later, she developed prolonged cough, night sweats, and weight loss, leading to a diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis (TB). She was prescribed free anti-TB medication but missed doses due to unstable housing and financial hardship.



Case Study 1 (cont')

Six months later, her symptoms persisted, and re-evaluation revealed multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), requiring second-line treatment unavailable for free at government hospitals.



Ethical Issues

- Health inequity- withhold medications due to outcome of poverty, inadequate housing.
- Unequal access to healthcare - Provision of the bare minimum to populations due to their nationality and ethnicity
- Public health risks from untreated MDR-TB
- Duty of care challenges due to policy

Case Study 2

K, a 25-year-old male, presented to the emergency department after a work-related crush injury to his right hand at a steel factory, with continuous bleeding despite first aid using four blood-soaked clothing items. Examination confirmed an extensive crush injury.



Case Study 2 (cont')

The team suspected immune thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP) and recommended platelet and packed red cell transfusion. However, as K—a long-term Rohingya refugee without identification—was unregistered, the blood bank withheld transfusion due to critically low supply, reserving products for a Malaysian citizen scheduled for high-risk elective surgery.



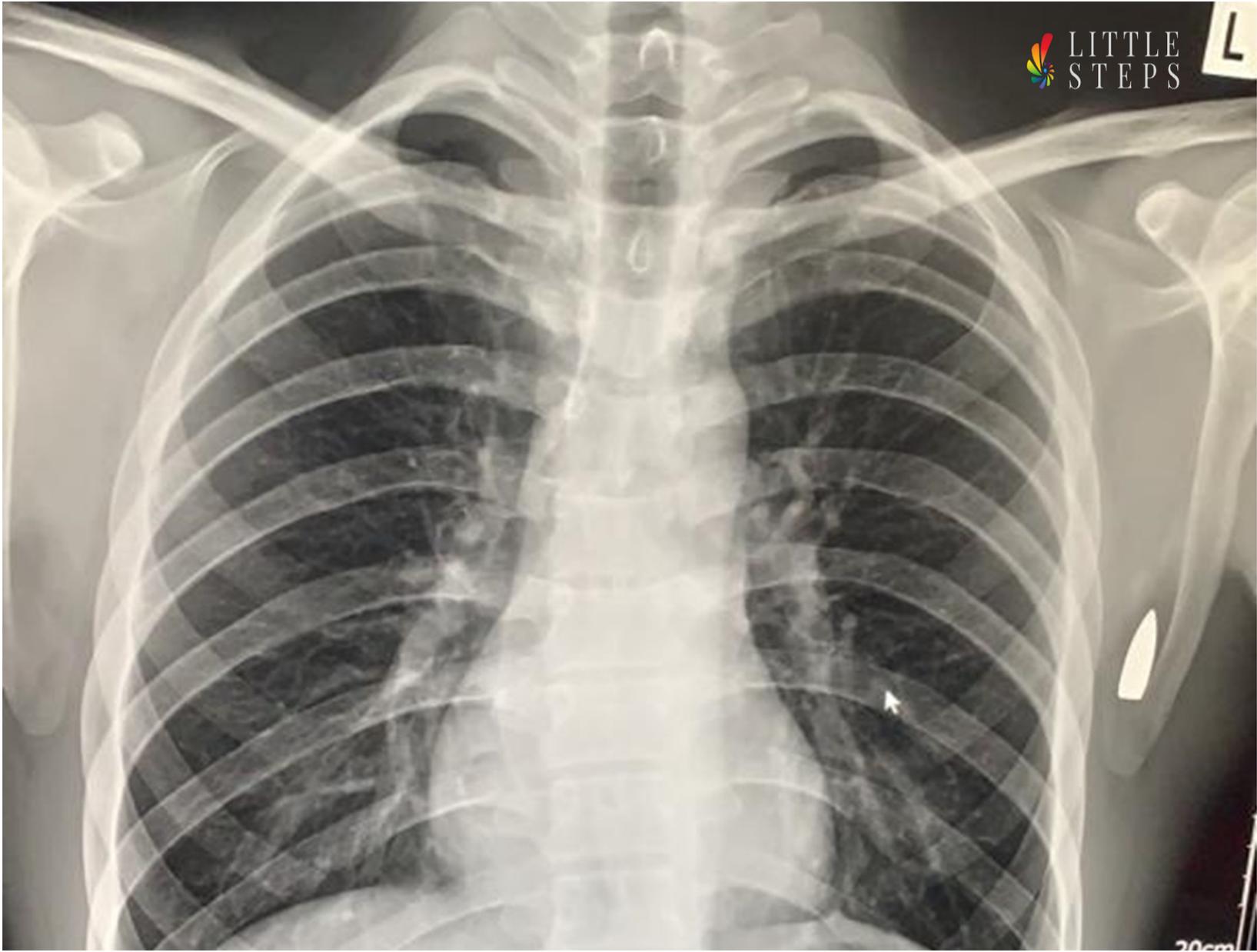
Ethical Issues

- Structural Injustice - Medical decision made based on policies on nationality
- Unjust allocation of a limited resource – emergency vs electives, risk of harm.

 LITTLE
STEPS

R





Case Study Findings

Medical decision
made based on
ethnicity or
nationality

Discriminatory
decisions from
healthcare staff

Suboptimal care of
clinical disease and
SDH

Can Islamic Ethics and Justice help?

Ethical Guidelines for Medical Professionals

Hippocratic
Oath

WMA
International
Code of
Medical Ethics

4 core
principles of
Bioethics

MMC - code of
professional
conduct and
good medical
practice

The Role of Islamic Ethics in Addressing Healthcare Disparities among forced migrants in Malaysia

Islamic Ethics and Justice - What it means to Muslim doctors?

Belief in
Divine
Scriptures

Concept of
justice in
Islam

Universal
Declaration
of Human
Rights vs
Islamic law

Historical
example of
Prophet as
refugee

Duty of
care of
Muslims to
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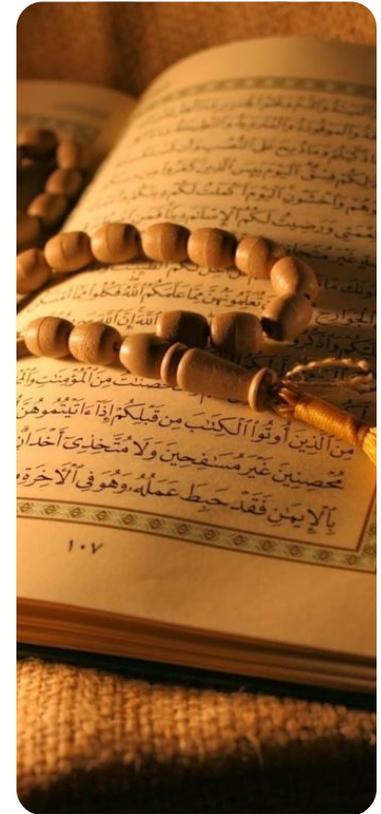
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Belief in Divine Scriptures

Pillars of faith :

- Believe in the Revealed Books : Quran
- Believe in the Messengers : Hadith



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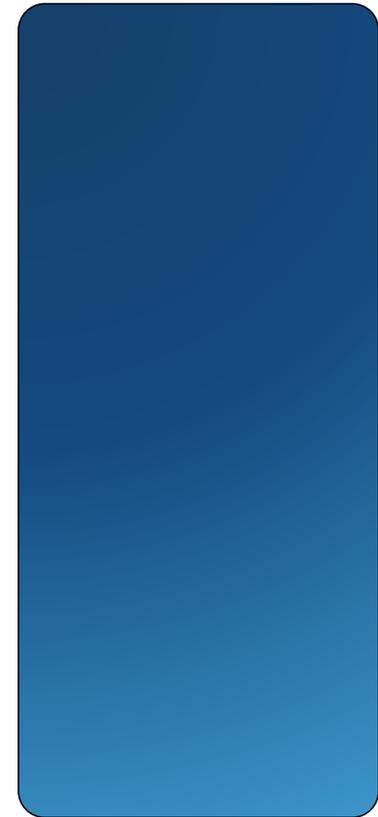
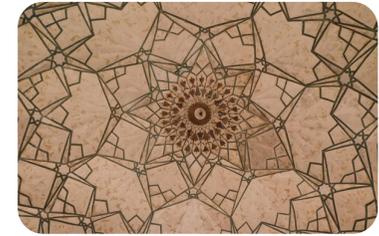
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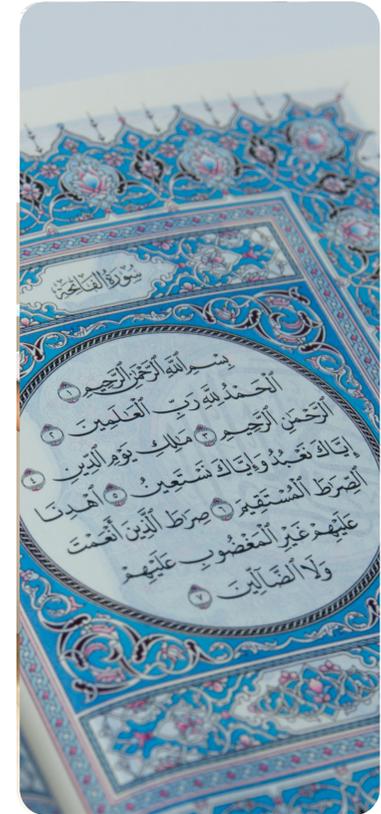
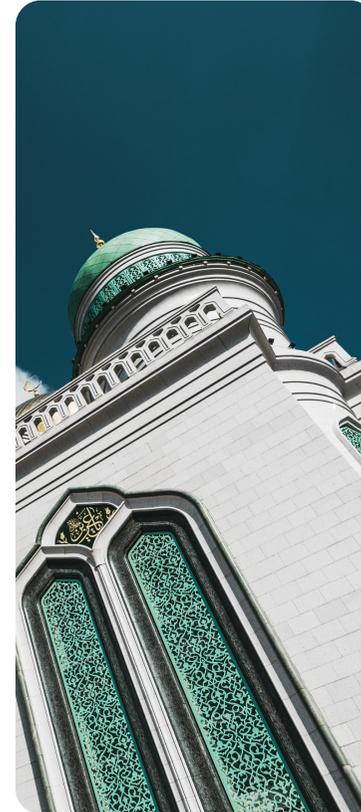
Concept of justice in Islam

- Sources - religious texts namely Tafsir (interpretations of the verses of Quran), Hadith (sayings & actions of The Prophet)
- Rooted in Fiqh and Maqasid al-Shariah
- Principles: justice ('adl), beneficence (ihsan), equity (qist), compassion (rahmah), preservation of life (hifz al-nafs)



Concept of justice in Islam

- *The Qur'an states, "Indeed, Allah wrongs none, not even an atom's weight of injustice" (Qur'an An-Nisa :40)*
- *As stated in the Hadith, The Prophet (SAW) said, "O My Servants, I have forbidden injustice upon myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not commit injustice." (Muslim)*



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Universal Declaration of Human Rights vs Islamic law

- The rights to asylum in Islamic Shari'ah
- To provide clear evidence that humanitarian principles of relieving suffering, providing refuge and granting safety, is similar to an integral part of Islamic Shari'ah



Universal Declaration of Human Rights vs Islamic law

- Comparative study affirmed the principle are aligned in both humanitarian principles and Islamic (Shari'ah) law based on the Quran, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Declaration on Human Rights in Islam

The significance to a Muslim, is that observance of this right as enshrined by Islam as a duty for every ardent Muslim (Abou-El-Wafa, 2009, p. 166)

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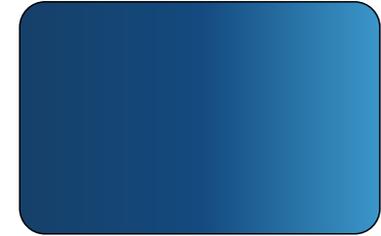
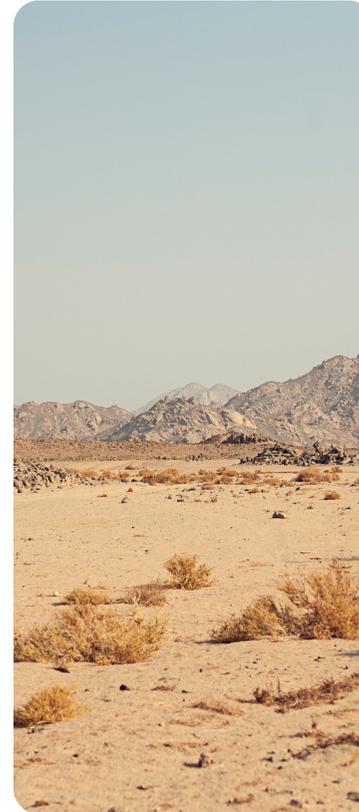
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Historical example of The Prophet as a refugee

"And [they] who settled in the city and embraced the faith before them love those who immigrate to them and find no hesitation in their hearts for what they are given [to share]. They give [them] preference over themselves, even if they are in need. And those who are saved from their own souls' greed, they are truly successful." (Al Hashr : 9)



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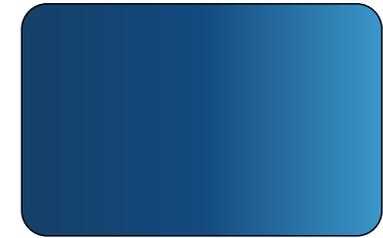
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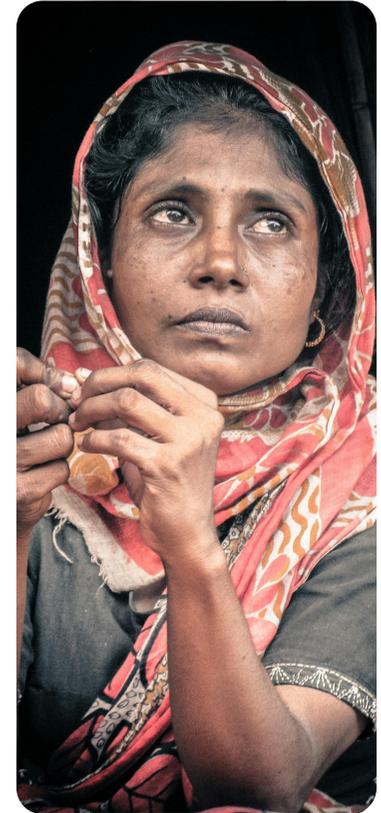
Duty of care and responsibility of Muslims to the oppressed

- Islamic ethics: rahmah (compassion), 'adl (justice), karamah insaniyyah (human dignity)
- Responsibility to all persecuted beings - not just to Muslims



Duty of care and responsibility of Muslims to all the oppressed

The Prophet ﷺ said that "an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a White has no superiority over a Black nor a Black has any superiority over a White except by piety and good action." (The Last Sermon of Prophet Muhammad(SAW), n.d.)



Ethical Responsibilities of Muslim Doctors

Uphold justice and compassion in practice

Advocate for equitable healthcare access

Serve as agents of moral and social change

Conclusion

Forced migrants face systemic injustices in Malaysia's healthcare - Ethical duty transcends policy and citizenship

Islamic ethics offers a framework for compassion and justice - Contradictions between Islamic identity and treatment of refugees

Muslim doctors should lead advocacy for dignity and equity - Align healthcare practice with moral and religious values

Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness....(Qur'an Al-Maidah 8)

Thank You



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