

Vale Professor Riaz Hassan

It is with great sadness that I share the news that Professor Riaz Hassan passed away on June 8th, 2022, in Melbourne. His passing represents a great loss to Australian sociology and the social sciences in general. He touched the lives of many – students and colleagues – especially at Flinders University, where he was professor from 1988 until 2004. He was first appointed to Flinders as senior lecturer in 1977 following a decade at the University of Singapore after completing his doctorate at Ohio State University in 1968.

Riaz's academic career extended over four decades, and he remained committed to the value of empirical social science to understand pressing problems on national and global levels. He conducted research in a wide variety of areas including housing, suicide, euthanasia, organisational culture, urban life, development, demography, and Muslim societies. More recently, he undertook pathbreaking research on Islam in contemporary life. He led a large-scale, 10-year multi-country study of Muslim religiosity in 2001 in which he explored Islamic consciousness, concluding that origins of modern Islamism are in the historical, social, political, and material conditions of Muslim countries and Western imperialism.

In 2005 Riaz received an Australian Research Council Professorial Fellowship and investigated the timely topic of 'Suicide Terrorism: The Use of Life as Weapon'. This project included compiling data on suicide attacks and exploring the ideology and motivations of terrorist organisations using suicide missions as their strategy. It advanced knowledge and national policy relevance regarding appropriate responses to terrorism. Findings have been published in *Faithlines: Muslim Conceptions of Islam and Society* (Oxford University Press, 2002), and *Inside Muslim Minds: Understanding Islamic Consciousness* (Melbourne University Press, 2008). His other recent books in this area are *Life as a Weapon: The Global Rise of Suicide Bombings* (Routledge 2010) and *Suicide Bombings* (Routledge 2011). Until his relocation to Melbourne, Riaz was affiliated with the *International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding* at the University of South Australia and was the lead author on a new report 'Islamophobia, social distance and fear of terrorism in Australia' in 2016. His research found that most Australians feel comfortable with their fellow Australian Muslims, contrary to media stereotypes. He continued publishing long after 'retirement' and his last

book was published in 2021 by Vanguard Books, *Indian Muslims, Sociology of a Religious Minority*.

As strong advocate for academic freedom and the pursuit of knowledge, in the aftermath of the World Trade Center bombings in 2001 Riaz publicly criticized Australia's anti-terror laws prohibiting researchers from conducting interviews, or having any contact, with terrorist groups. In the 1970s while working at the University of Singapore he faced intense political pressure as his research documenting the inadequacies of public housing being poorly received by the government.

Riaz remained committed to extending the value of sociology and social research in the region, and maintained strong links with Indonesian sociology, and returned to Singapore as a visiting scholar several times. He was specifically linked to the National University of Singapore Institute for South Asia Studies where he was a Visiting Research Professor until 2016.

Riaz engaged with policy formation and provided advice to various government and industry working parties, including the Working Party on Suicide Prevention for the National Health and Medical Research Council during the 1990s. In the early 2000s he was a Consultant for Boeing Corporation on the topic of human factors in airline crashes (2002-2004). He also worked with the Defence, Science and Training Organisation in Australia's Department of Defence to build their capacity in social science research.

He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2006 and elected as Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia in 1996.

When learning of this news colleagues reacted with descriptions of him as wonderful, kind, generous, gentle, hardworking, collegial, perceptive, an incisive colleague, and a true scholar, mentor and friend. Small things evoke strong memories; and I loved that we shared lunch together from time to time and had deep and intellectual conversations. He was professor of sociology in the formative days of my career, and I owe him much.

Sharyn Roach Anleu, Matthew Flinders Distinguished Professor
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