

Dehumanising Afghans in Pakistani Discourses: Reproducing Islamophobic Rhetoric on the Afghan ‘Other’



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In the context of a globalised ‘War on Terror’ and its accompanying Islamophobic rhetoric, all ‘Muslims’/ ‘Arabs’/ ‘South Asians’ are constructed as one-dimensional sub-human beings by hegemonic narratives – either as sites of ‘terror’, ‘Muslim women in need of saving’, or helpless victims. During this lecture, Alimia will explore how these ‘narratives of dehumanisation’ are reproduced within Pakistan and interact with regional, national, and local considerations and particularly impact non-citizen ‘Afghans’.

By focusing on popular media, newspaper reports and public statements made by the ruling elite in the aftermath of major ‘terrorist’ attacks in the region (16 December 2014, Peshawar; Quetta Bombings, January 2013; Killing of Rabbani, September 2011), and government refugee ‘management’ strategies, Alimia will unpack the different ways in which these narratives dehumanise Afghans.

Alimia will first explore how these constructions are used to conveniently deflect attention away from the material interests and role of Pakistan’s military dominated state and its international allies in creating the conditions of political violence in and outside of Pakistan. Second, she will explore how these constructions are most dominantly reproduced in the middle and upper classes and ignore the *shared* realities that many urban and rural poor Afghans and Pakistanis exist in, as well as the role that this urban underclass, which cuts across nationalities, has in contributing to local and national economies. Finally, Alimia will close by using the oral narratives of Afghans that she collected during fieldwork to show how urban poor Afghans contextualise and navigate with these ‘scapegoating’ practices in Pakistan.