

A refugee for over 10 years

BOSNIAN 'BULA' DIED IN CHRISTCHURCH

Sister Taiba Yusufovic was buried on 22 September 2004 after the ghusal (burial rites) were made at Masjid-un-Nur in Christchurch. May ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) make her grave comfortable, full of Nur (light) and also open the doors of Jannah for her deep involvement in her community affairs in Bosnia – inshallah.

She was born in Sarajevo in 1919 to a family of 3 brothers and one sister. "Baba' as the children called her had a very special job in the Islamic organisation in Sarajevo. " She also looked after all of us when our parents died in 1940. She observed all her fasts every Ramadan even in old age," said her sister Fatima, from her home in Christchurch..

She earned the title of a Bosnian 'Bula' as she was involved in community work whose duties included giving religious instruction and washing female corpses for burial. A bula will also lead the Qur'an Hatam at the religious and social ceremony of prayers for the dead attended by women and held at a home. Marhum Sister Taiba used to arrange the women's Islamic education, Qur'an studies and lead the prayers for women when there were no men around. She was the connection between women, the household and Muslim religious practices. Muslim women in Bosnia played a very significant role in preserving religious education for the young in the homes. The Bulas were usually the daughters of Ulama or learned scholars.

When the war started in Bosnia in 1991, her granddaughter married a Kiwi who went over from Christchurch to photograph the fighting. When husband and wife returned to Christchurch they applied and managed to bring out the wife's entire family, that is, the grandmother (Bula -Taiba Yusufovic), the Bula's daughter, Fatima & her husband, Ahmed & their nine children.

When Marhum Taiba arrived in New Zealand she was 77 years old. She soon settled in and taught Islam to her own grandchildren at home as well as organise the "Mevlud" (Maulid) for the Bosnian community in Canterbury. Despite her poor English, she was known to some of the Muslim sisters living in Christchurch. When she reached the good age of 84 she became weak and frail and the family was advised to place her in a retirement home. The family refused and kept her at home caring for her with lots of love from everyone around. She died in the arms of Emma, her granddaughter.

"On behalf of the family I want to thank Masjid Nur and the Muslim community of Christchurch for all their help, assistance and support they gave the family with the Janaza (funeral) of my beloved Baba," were the words of appreciation expressed by Emma.

The readers of Al Mujaddid wish to convey our belated sympathies to the bereaved family. May ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) lessen you pain at your great loss.

Report by Br. Abdullah Drury – Christchurch