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Despicable Atrocities



School Girls Kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria

Enlightenment readers will recall the general spirit of optimism that prevailed on New Year's Eve 1999 as mammoth displays of fireworks erupted in cities around the world to welcome in the third millennium. Two world wars and the cold war were behind us and no major calamities were anticipated. From 1945 onward, many countries enjoyed a level of middle class prosperity that had never been experienced before. But then on September 11th 2001, Islamic fundamentalist terrorism reared its ugly head with hijacked aircraft flying into the World Trade Center towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, while brave passengers foiled an attempt to target the Capitol or the White House. Since that time, Islamist militants have caused havoc in various areas of the world, and now we are experiencing chilling occurrences such as that depicted above in Nigeria and the killing of non-Muslims by Islamic State militants in Iraq. This special issue of the *Enlightenment* is devoted to Islamic conflicts, and near the end is an article on what the Dutch are doing about their problems.

The Causes of Islamic Conflicts Are Varied

The causes of Islamic conflicts and atrocities vary greatly. One cause is the hatred of the West, particularly the United States, that precipitated 9/11 and other al-Qaeda attacks. It's not that we did not have warnings of what might lie ahead; ominous signs were previously present. In April 1983 a car bomb attack on the US Embassy in Beirut claimed 63 lives, including 17 Americans. In August 1998 al-Qaeda attacked the US embassy in Nairobi where 213 were killed including 12 Americans. In October 2000, an attack on the USS Cole at the port of Aden in Yemen killed 17 American sailors and injured 39. In hindsight, perhaps these and other similar attacks against US property should have made the US more vigilant about these threats.

The cause of the current conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims goes back to 632 CE when Muhammad died. After his death there was a dispute about who should carry on as his rightful heir. One faction believed his son-in-law Ali should be the leader while another faction claimed that the Umayyad Caliphs should have this honour. In the end the Caliphs prevailed and the majority of Muslims today are Sunnis. Nevertheless, a smaller faction of Shias survived and today only about 13% of Muslims are Shias. The Shias live mostly in Iran and southern Iraq, with smaller numbers living in Syria and Lebanon. It is the Sunni/Shia split that is at least partly responsible for the civil war in Syria and for the Sunni Islamic State (formerly ISIS) movement that wants to form an Islamic Caliphate under Sharia law from Syria through to a substantial part of Iraq. Sharia law is a vile code of life advocating the severance of hands for stealing and floggings and even stoning to death for adultery and apostasy.

Another cause of conflict resulting in despicable atrocities is the contention of certain Islamist fundamentalists that girls should not be educated. The actions of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan in this regard are well documented in Malala Yousafzai's book *I Am Malala*, and the kidnapping of school girls in Nigeria by Boko Haram is already mentioned on the cover page. Like the ISIS faction in Syria/Iraq, both the Taliban and Boko Haram advocate the establishment of Sharia law in Islamic states.

And then there is the hatred directed toward Christians by some Islamic radicals. A case in point is the ongoing conflict between North and South Sudan, and the school girls captured in Nigeria were Christians who Boko Haram claims have now been converted to the Muslim faith.

But all the problems being caused by Muslims are not just in countries where Muslims are the majority. Problems are also occurring in various European countries where the number of Muslims is reaching the point where they are beginning to demand special treatment and the acceptance of values that are not compatible with normal Western standards. Also, second generation Muslim youth are forming terrorist cabals and have caused wanton destruction as with the bus and underground bombings in London England in July 2005. Some countries have recognized that multiculturalism is not working and are taking action. For example, France is attempting to outlaw the wearing of head coverings in schools and the Dutch are enacting legislation to protect the values they cherish. An account of what the Dutch are doing appears on page 7.

The above are just a few of the events causing concern throughout the world at the present time. In the following article entitled Muslim Fundamentalism, humanist Dagmar Godard-Zelinkova documents a number of other atrocities carried out by Muslim radicals in the recent past and today. Following Dagmar's article, an attempt is made to suggest what actions might be taken to help lessen the above mentioned and other threats, recognizing the difficulties involved.

Muslim Fundamentalism

By Dagmar Gontard-Zelinkova, 2014-05-03

Those who were abruptly awakened in the middle of the night by a frantic pounding on their door realized that they were targeted. Calling for help would be useless. Nobody in the neighborhood would come to their rescue. Killings were common and nobody really wanted to interfere. Calling the police would be almost as useless; they were losing their officers to the armed militias and, quite often, they were as scared as the people themselves.

But the door had to be opened, and if not opened voluntarily, it would be kicked in. On that night, in the midst of Algerian terrifying 1990s, it was Fatma Bisikri's daughter who opened the door. Three armed men pushed their way in. They dragged six of her children out of the house. She tried to stop them but they put the knife to her throat. She let go. At first light, Fatma went to look for her children. She found them in a nearby brook where they had been dumped after having their throats slit. Later on, someone suggested to Fatma that this was in retaliation for her daughter's refusal to stop teaching despite being ordered to do so by the local fundamentalists in their crusade against education.

Education was a sin, but the education of women was the worst possible sin and had to be punished by death, no less. Amel Zenoune-Zouani was among countless females who paid dearly for their dream of being educated. She was twenty-two years old and a third-year law student, when she was pulled out from a bus, at a fake check-point, by men of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). Passengers on the bus later told her family that one of those men had a knife and was rubbing it on the pavement prior to slitting her throat. Her death was meant as a warning: one of the GIA men told the other passengers: "If you go to school, if you go to the university, the day will come when we will kill all of you like this."

Fatma's and Amel's stories were not isolated occurrences in Algeria in the 1990s. Indeed, it is estimated that between 150,000 and 200,000 were killed and at least 7000 disappeared during that decade. What brought Algeria to those apocalyptic years? In a nutshell: after Independence in 1962, the country embarked on the path of socialism and considerable progress was achieved in building the new society. Yet, this occurred under the authoritarian regime of one-party rule which harshly suppressed human rights. Dissenting voices were heard with increasing insistence, leading the government to authorize opposition parties in the 1980s, including the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The FIS openly declared that they did not believe in democracy. They also believed that society needed to be healed from the contamination of the "Western secularist virus." Their prescription was: "Islam is the solution."

Clashes between liberal Algerians and the fundamentalists were inevitable and during the 1990s the whole population was taken hostage, trapped between government forces and various offshoots of Islamist militias. Islamists' targets were not limited to the field of education; indeed artists, intellectuals and journalists became their enemies as well. Aissa Mohamed was an accomplished violinist. He loved to share his passion for music with children, in a music school which he ran in Blida. He also coached children's sporting events. He was threatened by the terrorists who said that music and sports were *haram* and forbidden by the Qur'an. He was ordered to give up both. Mohamed paid with his life for disobeying that order. He was killed at the age of thirty-eight.

Yet, in spite of the prevailing terror, the resistance of liberal Algerians never waned. When the Press House in Algiers was destroyed by bombing on February 11, 1996, Algerian journalists faced not only fundamentalist terrorism but also pressure from the government not to expose the scale of that terrorism. They would defy both. In the midst of utter destruction, they returned to their desks and, to honour their

fallen comrades, went on with publication of the gruesome event. Throughout the country, women got together and organized under the Algerian Rally of Democratic Women. Their goal was that the truth be known. They turned to NGO and Human Rights associations for help. Alas, Western associations and media were reluctant to investigate a complex situation and the daily Algerian atrocities rarely got a thorough reporting on the international scene.

The Algerian tragedy is not unique: it is a pattern repeated in every country where Islamists succeed in getting the upper hand. The most surprising case may be Egypt. During the first part of the twentieth century the country was rather free. Women threw their veil into the wind, founded their organizations and became emancipated. In 1937, a freethinking Ismail Adham was even able to publish his book *Why Am I an Atheist*. After 1952, when Nasser embarked on the path of Arabic socialism, Islamic political groups stood in his way. To counter their influence, military rulers established close links with the Al-Azhar religious establishment, whose influence increased over the years. Books, speeches or artistic materials deemed inconsistent with Islamic law were censored. Book banning is not the most serious obstacle that intellectuals face in Egypt. The worst is being accused of being anti-Islamic or a heretic or even an apostate. Gamal Al-Banna is a well-known liberal thinker. Along with fellow reformers, he held a conference in Cairo in 2004 called "Islam and Reform." The conference was harshly criticized by Al-Azhar authorities. Ahmed Subhy Mansour taught the Muslim history at Al-Azhar but got into trouble, both with fundamentalists and with the Egyptian regime, when he argued that the Qu'ran shows that Mohammed was not infallible. Consequently, he was accused of insulting Islam and thrown into prison. Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd, who received a doctorate from Cairo University for research on Qur'anic interpretation, got into trouble when he wrote *The Critic of Religious Discourse*. He was accused of abandoning his faith in Islam and Islamist lawyers filed a lawsuit demanding the break-up of his marriage. They argued that an apostate and a Muslim woman cannot be married. Abu-Zayd fled to the Netherlands where he had an offer to teach at Leiden University. Farag Foda was a liberal thinker who mocked the Islamist interpretation of the Koran. He also defended the separation of religion and state. He paid dearly for his courageous stand; in 1992 he was murdered.

It is an irony that Pakistan, whose founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah envisioned as a secular country, evolved into a harsh bastion of fundamentalism. Under Jinnah's successors, the initial constitution was abrogated several times. Under the military rule of General Zia ul-Haq, blasphemy laws were introduced and then, in 1979, religious authorities brought in ordinances, prescribing amputation for theft, stoning and whipping for unlawful sexual intercourse, and for consumption of alcohol. The best known of Islamic scholars, Mohammad Younas Shaikh, who started an organization called "The Enlightenment," dedicated to discussing Islam in a contemporary context, was accused of insulting Islam and got arrested in 2001. At his trial, not only was he called an apostate but his lawyers too were accused of apostasy. Shaikh spent two years in solitary confinement and then, after his retrial, when the judge found the original judgment unsound, he was secretly released in 2003. He remained in Pakistan for a time, but after his accusers tried to appeal his acquittal, he fled to Europe. The year 2011, in particular, will remain a tragic reminder of Pakistan having slipped the wrong way. Two politicians were murdered – Shabhaz Bhatti, a champion of religious freedom and Salman Taseer, Governor of Punjab, for opposing Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

Another country which missed its date with modernity is Chechnya. After a bloody war with Russia, there was much freedom in the 1990s. Before the war, Chechen Muslims had followed a spiritual Sufi Islam which is in sharp contrast with the rigid dogma of the fundamentalists. But like in other countries, the extremists tend to grow during wartime. Those who emerged in the nineties in Chechnya tried to impose their interpretation of Islam. Under the current Chechen president, Ramzan Kadyrov, the situation is deteriorating dramatically, especially for women. Kadyrov claims that they are inferior, that they are men's property and he wants them to be veiled. Russian authorities are acquiescing to all this, as long as

Kadyrov opposes independence. Meanwhile, radicals are hunting down those who represent tolerant Islam and killing them.

There is no country in the Muslim world where the lives of reformers are not under threat; the last three decades have seen an ever growing radicalization. Khomeiny's Islamic Revolution takes all the credit here. Yet those who had agitated for the Shah's overthrow and welcomed with great enthusiasm the Ayatollah's return from the exile, became quickly disillusioned. As Shirin Ebadi pointed out in her book *Iran Awakening*, the taste of Revolution was rather bitter. Women became the first victims. After having been the first woman judge in Iran, the first thing Ebadi heard from the newly appointed overseer of the Ministry of Justice was: "Don't you think that out of respect for our beloved Imam Khomeini, who has graced Iran with his return, it would be better if you covered your hair?" The logical course of events simply followed: because she was a woman, she was dismissed from her post. But she would not sit inactive at home; she would continue to fight against rape, torture and killings in Iranian prisons. In 2003, she was the first Iranian woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her fight against human rights abuses. Nevertheless, relentless pressure from the government, coupled with death threats to her and her family, led her to flee to the UK. From there she continues to challenge the Iranian government which continues to eliminate its opponents, charging them with "friendship with the enemies of God," "insulting the Prophet," obstructing the way of God" and similar accusations.

Who are those "defenders of faith"? Those self-appointed spokespersons for Allah the Great? Those mullahs who try to impose their rigid way of life on the whole world? Music, sports, satellite dishes, cell-phones, information and education are not to their liking. Mali used to be a country with the richest and most colourful women's fashion in Africa. That was replaced by veils. Timbuctu harboured tombs of Sufi saints. They were destroyed. Malian Islam had a tradition of tolerance. The killings in the name of Allah Akhbar replaced it. That hunger for destruction does not stop with the Muslim world. Fatwas condemning so-called apostates follow them into the West. Unfortunately, just as in the Muslim world, those courageous voices, calling for Islam with a human face, often find themselves stranded between, on one hand, the reluctance of their new country to support their struggle and, on the other hand, the fundamentalists' merciless determination to kill them.

"Muslims like me – those who accept Islam yet revile Islamism – are rendered voiceless," said Quanta Ahmad who testified, in March 2011, at the hearings held by the House Committee on Homeland Security, examining the radicalization within the Muslim American community. "The (Peter) King's investigative hearings on radical Islam showed how the same narratives that drove young Pakistani to violence are alive in the United States today, thriving amid similarly vulnerable, disconnected and indoctrinated youth. Such Islamist radicalization is ongoing in our civilian, military and prison communities... Unfortunately, where there should be an outcry and carefully targeted action in response to these critically important findings, we remain mired in political correctness by refusing to identify our enemies' driving ideology. Islamists distract the discussion from the root of the problem by focusing our attention on what they call 'Islamophobia,' arguing that the world is using a broad brush to describe Muslims."

Zahudi Jasser was another Muslim who testified at the hearings. A prominent doctor in Arizona, he runs a small non-profit group that partners with groups critical of Muslim leadership. He believes that Muslims need to be more outspoken about intolerances in their scriptures and less critical of America.

What was the reaction to the hearings? A general discomfort. "Hearings may well do a lot of damage" and "Hearings are stoking the fires of Islamophobia" were common comments.

“While hostility toward Islam and Muslims is a legitimate and vital concern,” wrote the late Abdurrahman Wahid, President of Indonesia, “we must recognize that a major cause of such hostility is the behaviour of certain Muslims themselves, who propagate a harsh, repressive, supremacist, and often violent understanding of Islam. Rather than legally stifle criticism and debate – which will only encourage Muslim fundamentalists in their efforts to impose a spiritually void, harsh and monolithic understanding of Islam upon all the world – Western authorities should instead firmly defend freedom of expression, not only in their own nations, but globally, as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

I will conclude with Abdurrahman Wahid’s thought-provoking words about classical Islamic civilization:

“The greatness of classical Islamic civilization – which incorporated a human and cosmopolitan universalism – stemmed largely from the intellectual and spiritual maturity that grew from the amalgamation of Arab, Greek, Jewish, Christian, and Persian influences. That is why I wept upon seeing Ibn Rushd’s commentary on *The Nicomachean Ethics*, lovingly preserved and displayed, during a visit some years ago to Fes, Morocco. For if not for Aristotle and his great treatise, I might have become a Muslim fundamentalist myself.”

Sources

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- Paul Marshall & Nina Shea: *Silenced*
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- Abdurrahman Wahid: *God Needs No Defense*

This article first appeared on line at [http//aft.atheisme.ca](http://aft.atheisme.ca) and is reprinted with Dagmar’s permission.

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What Can Be Done?

The root cause of all Islamic atrocities is Muslim belief in a nonsensical legend. According to the legend, in the year 610 CE the 40 year old Arab merchant Muhammad received a message from Allah via the angel Gabriel commanding him to recite. For 23 years until his death in 623, it is claimed he recited these messages from Gabriel to his followers as the unadulterated word of the supreme and only god Allah. Eventually Muhammad’s supposed words were collected together into the contentious Qur’an. After Muhammad’s death his teachings lived on. Muslim warriors, energized by his exhortations to jihad, embarked on a series of conquests unprecedented in their breadth and swiftness. The expansion has continued. Pew Research states there were 1.6 billion Muslims on planet earth in 2010, and forecast that there will be over 2.2 billion by 2030. This surely is cause for concern, especially in Europe.

Moderate Muslims may claim that the majority of Muslims are peace loving and that Islam is indeed a religion of peace. This may be true, but we know there is a difficult-to-determine number of radical fundamentalist Muslims, many of whom are terrorists, who earnestly believe Allah has commanded them to establish Islamic Caliphates wherever possible and enact Sharia law. To further their cause they

indoctrinate Muslim youth in madrassas to become suicide bombers and kill the infidels. In the long run, Muslim youth must be convinced that the religious beliefs held by the radicals are not credible or realistic and that the values of a democratic society are preferable to Sharia law. But this could well take several generations. In the meantime, are there effective actions that the West can employ to lessen future atrocities?

One thing that should not be done by the West is the waging of **pre-emptive** hopeless wars as happened in Afghanistan and Iraq. These wars have only made things worse. (Although eventually Osama bin Laden was captured and killed). Most Western nations are no longer willing to put "boots on the ground," but have been willing to provide logistical and air support where the cause is thought to be justified as happened in Libya and now in Iraq against Islamic State radicals. But unfortunately the challenge of replacing dictatorial regimes and establishing a semblance of democracy has proved to be extremely difficult, as experience in Libya, Egypt and Iraq has proved. Nevertheless, there are times when logistical and air support can be beneficial. Hopefully this will be the case in the current situation in Iraq.

The conflicts between Sunnis and Shias can only be resolved by the people themselves when the situation gets so bad that a bilateral settlement is the only solution. There is a parallel here with the 30 Years War in Europe (1618-1648), part of which involved conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. After devastation of entire regions and the bankrupting of most of the combatant powers, hostilities ended with the treaties of Osnabruck and Munster, part of Peace of Westphalia. There were no more major religious wars in Europe. Sadly, the same hardships may have to occur before an end comes to the inane Sunni/Shia conflicts, but with oil money on both sides, the struggles could unfortunately go on for a long time.

Regarding the threat of terrorist attacks on Western countries by the likes of al-Qaeda and like-minded organizations, perhaps the best course of action is to continue with the security practices now in place. Drone attacks on clandestine headquarters and training camps may be worth continuing. But what about threats by foreign populations from within a country? Well the Dutch have faced this situation head on and taken action, as the following article, "You Have to Love the Dutch," describes.

You Have to Love the Dutch

The Netherlands, where six per cent of the population is now Muslim, is scrapping multiculturalism. The Dutch government says it will abandon the long-standing model of multiculturalism that has encouraged Muslim immigrants to create a parallel society within the Netherlands.

A new integration bill, which Dutch Interior Minister Piet Hein Donner presented to parliament on June 16, reads: "The government shares the social dissatisfaction over the multicultural society model and plans to shift priority to the values of the Dutch people." In the new integration system, the values of the Dutch society play a central role. With this change, the government steps away from the model of a multicultural society. The letter continues: "A more obligatory integration is justified because the government also demands that from its own citizens." It is necessary because otherwise the society gradually grows apart and eventually no one feels at home anymore in the Netherlands.

The new integration policy will place more demands on immigrants. For example, immigrants will be required to learn the Dutch language, and the government will take a tougher approach to immigrants who ignore Dutch values or disobey Dutch law. The government will also stop offering special subsidies for Muslim immigrants because, according to Donner; "It is not the government's job to integrate immigrants."

The government will introduce new legislation that outlaws forced marriages and will also impose tougher measures against Muslim immigrants who lower their chances of employment by the way they dress. More specifically, the government imposed a ban on face-covering Islamic burkas as of January 1, 2013. Holland has done that whole liberal thing and realized, maybe too late, that creating a nation of tribes will kill the nation itself.

A Comment: Muslim immigrants leave their countries of birth because of civil and political unrest CREATED BY THE VERY NATURE OF THEIR CULTURE. Countries like Holland, Canada, the UK and Australia have an established way of life that actually works, so why embrace the unworkable? If Muslims do not wish to accept another culture, the answer is simple: "STAY WHERE YOU ARE!!" This gives a whole new meaning to the term 'Dutch Courage.' Unfortunately, Australian, UK, and Canadian politicians don't seem to have the guts to do the same. Go Dutch - but why wait? The future of Australia, the UK and Canada must be protected.

Editors Note Someone sent this article over the internet, and I thought it was worth passing on to *Enlightenment* readers. Certainly moderate Canadian Muslims like Tarek Fatah and Salim Mansur, who both oppose Canada's multiculturalism policies, would agree with what the Dutch are doing.

Where are the Moderate Muslim Leaders?

It just seems incredible that in the 21st century there are areas where people are living under harsh Sharia law and where tribalism still exists and where honor killings still occur, all based on a fallacious religion. Surely there must be enough moderate Muslims in the world who could unite to form a movement opposing the radicals; Muslims who would sincerely want to bring an end to the despicable atrocities now occurring, and allow all Muslims, male and female, to be educated and live in peaceful societies. Until Muslim leaders of this ilk come forward, and bring about significant improvements, the swords of Islamic radicals and terrorists will hang over the rest of humanity.

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