

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Teddy Bears, Picnics and other Delusions of Grandeur

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Ok, so maybe I don't have anything to say about picnics, but there's plenty to talk about with respect to some Muslims in the West living in their usual pseudo-megalomaniac state - you know, that condition that makes us Muslims living in the non-Muslim lands of ignorance as Defenders of the Faith and the *Marja'* of Islam for the other 1.5 billion Muslims who live in the...err...*Muslim* lands.

My criticism is not for us in Europe or the Americas etc to have a *Shar'ī* opinion on something; nay, my contempt is for Muslims in our non-Muslim countries passing judgement on the rest of the world on what Islam *should* be or how other people should run *their* countries and cultures according to *our* "Western pristine standards". The really shocking thing is that for a nation like ours that has been commanded by God to verify everything we hear, we *still* make assumptions and rulings based on the absence of real facts and details behind what happens in cases reported to us by those agencies that have a vested interest in telling us what *they* want us to believe.

Whether it's a court in Saudi Arabia, a decision in Afghanistan, a ruling in Malaysia or political jousting in the Sudan, the West didn't reach the heights it has by supporting countries to rule according to their Islamic or pseudo-Islamic systems. Today, they have a problem with the naming of a teddy bear, later tonight it's the prescribed punishments (*Hudūd*) and then tomorrow it's whether there really is any need to have some resemblance of formal religious practice and devotion in our "daily, busy, 21st Century" lives.

Indeed the real problem, whilst growing up as Muslims in the Western liberal democracies that we form part of, is that we've lost the stomach for a society to be ruled by Islamic Law. No-one likes to admit it, but the signs are all there for everyone to see. In recent times, even more so since 9/11, the inferiority complex that we have fallen into with respect to our *Hudūd* laws for example or indeed any form of punishment that a Muslim state might want to confer to its citizens, is galling to say the least. It's as if we've turned into born-again Christians over night and the mantra of "love, love,

love” has permeated our belief process - thus, everyone else in the world other than the Muslims must have the right to have a penal code and a criminal justice system. Just not the Muslims of course. What’s worse is that after being fed this belief ever so slowly and patiently in our democracies, we then proceed to establish it ourselves in our writings, speeches and ideas on the rest of the Ummah. The whole approach would be utterly laughable if it wasn’t so blatantly true and damaging.

Part of our delusion in the West as Muslims is believing that we’re more special than we actually are. In fact, I find it interesting that some of us blame the Americans for not showing equal concern for an American casualty and a Muslim casualty during their neo-fascist advances into Muslim land. Yet, it is our very *own* Muslims here in the West who patronise and hold in contempt the rest of the Muslims in the “developing” world, and far from showing equal respect to our brothers and sisters abroad, we hold them to be backward, ignorant, stubborn, cruel and everything else that our Western masters feed us. Are we then any better than those who value their own peoples’ lives more than the foreign lives when *we* indeed value our own understanding of Islam so much more than those in the rest of the Muslim world? People in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.

For the record, the *Fuqahā’* have agreed that the intentional *istihzā’* (insulting) of the Prophets (upon whom be peace) is an act which leads to the death penalty, whether the perpetrator is a Muslim or non-Muslim. There is a scholarly discussion whether it is a prescribed punishment (*hadd*) or a discretionary punishment (*ta’zīr*).

Likewise, it is also agreed that the basic principle in human beings is their innocence from wanting to insult people intentionally. In the Sudanese case, one would have to prove without doubt that the British lady in question intentionally set out to insult the Prophet (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*). Naturally, this is very difficult and one is not tasked to look into detail for that which is not clear and obvious.

Likewise, there are some narrations which show the Muslims naming animals and other things by human names that are shared in principle with the Prophets, without any intention of course to belittle the namesake. Moreover, when a person comes from a culture where the naming of animals and objects is commonplace, that cultural understanding can be a decisive defence in a court of law for ones unintentional actions.

Thus the most correct opinion would be that no charges be pressed against such an action. That is the *Shar'ī* conclusion remember and not what various governments decide to do for their own interests.

Of course, if intent has been proved then it is a different story. In recent international cases involving Muslim countries, we just haven't had access to the facts. Yet the issue still remains why there is a need for British Muslims to involve themselves in something which they have nothing to do with? We don't know the details from either side, and there is clearly a game of politics being played over other sensitive issues. Muslims trying to be seen to uphold "good citizenship" by condemnation of places like Sudan, or by sending delegations etc, although not wrong in itself, only adds to the well-held belief that Western Muslims are just puppets of their masters in those issues that we can be used beneficially.

One wonders what is the greater case of *istihzā'* here: the supposed actions of a teacher in naming a teddy bear or the response of the "Not Guilty M'Lud" Muslims we're often forced to be today every time a newspaper can't find something more sensational to write about.

We don't have to defend the ruling kingship of Saudia Arabia any more than the political chess moves of the Sudanese government. Neither do we need to explain and feel guilty about the dictatorships of Pakistan or the terrorist *Khawārij* of Iraq. The West is well acquainted with all that it has helped create, and it wasn't in *our* name. We should be happy to defend Islam but let's not humiliate ourselves in the process and take on burdens that are not ours to bear, based upon principles that are alien to our tradition – yes, standing for justice and defending the innocent is excellent but there's plenty of that to be done here in the UK and other places, and we shouldn't just react to what is made front page news according to the whims and desires of the powerful few. It might be seen as good PR to send token Muslims abroad to help cut a woman's stay in a house from four days more to only three days more, but how one wishes that we Muslims would put in the same effort for others of our very own citizens who are being treated unjustly in our countries here in the West. But then, it's not the same photo-shoot or front page headline is it?

And Allāh knows best.