

Homophobia: A Consequence of Islamophobia

Dr. Eltayeb Salih Abuelyaman

Islamophobia (ie. Islam+phobia, "fear") According to the definition in the Wikipedia, Islamophobia is "prejudice against, or an irrational fear of Islam or Muslims. The term seems to date back to the late 1980s, but came into common usage after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States to refer to types of political dialogue that appeared prejudicially resistant to pro-Muslims arguments. In 1997, the British Runnymede Trust defined Islamophobia as the "dread or hatred of Islam and therefore, to the fear and dislike of all Muslims," stating that it also refers to the practice of discriminating against Muslims by excluding them from the economic, social, and public life of the nation. It includes the perception that Islam has no values in common with other cultures, is inferior to the West and is a violent political ideology rather than a religion. Steps were taken in the UK toward official acceptance of the term in January 2001 at the "Stockholm International Forum on Combating Intolerance", where Islamophobia was recognized as a form of intolerance alongside Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism."

Before I go on any further in this document I need to applaud the restless effort by Muslims, Christians, Jews and others for the magnificent job they are doing to exterminate Islamophobia. The latest example of such effort took place towards the end of March 2011, when very honorable and respectable noble Americans of high integrity pressured law makers to legislate laws that would make discrimination against Muslims illegal. Such are results of efforts of Majlis Alshoura of New York and other organizations that are helping to eradicate Islamophobia.

I will not talk about Islamophobia in general because even a complete book would not be enough to contain what I need to write. However, I will take this opportunity to write about the consistent profiling and targeting of Muslims by some officials in general, and some airport authorities in particular.

Let us take a look at one of the Terrorist Detection Systems (TDS), which is used by Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers and/or airliners at airports. The selection of passengers by the system for further security inspection is not random as its operators claim. It relies mostly on Muslim names. Experts in "data mining" and "terrorist task forces" would admit that it is only necessary but not sufficient to use patterns of names for detecting potential terrorist.

In any case, one can find excuse for TDS operators when the selection of names is not discriminative in nature. Unfortunately the system does discriminate on the bases of religion by targeting names common only to Muslims. However, names that do not smell Islamic are, for the most part, pardoned. In our opinion, terrorism has no religion and is committed by evil people regardless of religion. The terrorist Timothy McVeigh is neither a Muslim nor Christian or Jewish. Equally, all the nineteen who committed the September 11 terror acts are neither Muslims nor Christians or Jewish.

The fact that matters is that Timothy was responsible for the Oklahoma City Bombing, the deadliest act of terrorism in the US prior to 9/11, killing 168 people. Nonetheless, a Homeland Security official made a statement saying that Timothy is not a terrorist, neither is Eric Rudolph, who killed two people and injured hundreds others in a bombing campaign against abortion and a "homosexual agenda." For more

on this see the link for reference. (<http://www.greenisthenewred.com/blog/homeland-security-says-timothy-mcveigh-isnt-a-terrorist-but-peace-activists-are/701/>). "

The incongruity here is that, when the act of terrorization is committed by a non-Muslim, the benefit of the doubt is by default and the doer is declared 'not a terrorist'. Timothy is not a terrorist. Andrew Joseph Stack III who crashed a plane in the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) building in Austin Texas in February of 2010 is not a terrorist, and men who kill ladies who choose to abort their unborn babies are not terrorists. Isn't it logical to state that killing a pregnant woman is more severe than abortion, the crime they are killing the woman for? That is, the woman plans to kill a 'potential life' and for that reason they are killing both the woman and the potential life she is bearing. What about John Hinckley Jr. who attempted to assassinate our newly elected then, late President Ronald Reagan in broad day light in 1981? Has anyone called him a terrorist or associated his religion with terrorism? All of these men are not called terrorists because of reason of insanity according to some.

If insane people could be that dangerous, why didn't authority talk about the crimes they committed and the danger they pose? Why didn't the media discuss ways of detections and possibly preventions of crimes they may commit? Well, the answer I expect them to give is probably they wouldn't do so because it might hurt the feeling of other insane people. Of course that is a logical answer. However, a question that follows is why they are so sensitive to the sensitivity of the insane but, at the same time, they are not at all sensitive to the sensitivity of over a billion commonsensical Muslims.

What our fellow Americans do not know is that whenever terrorism hits any place in the US, or the Oxidant, Muslims would be worried and automatically default to making three entreaties. Firstly, they pray that no Muslim is involved. Secondly, they pray that the media acts rationally enough not to accuse Muslims for it. Thirdly, they pray that extremist groups find out that Muslims were not involved before they take the law in their own hands and go after them. All the three prayers are justified by, and as a result of, painful past experiences Muslims went through.

Muslims are totally in limbo when it comes to the use, or more accurately the misuse of the word terrorism. Perhaps, I should say, Muslims are puzzled by the political exploitation of the word. It makes me really wonder, what does the dictionary say about its meaning?

Meaning of the word terrorism: One meaning of the word terrorism is "*the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially for political purposes.*" I wonder how many groups in the US this definition applies to! A second meaning of the word is "*the state of fear and submission produced by terrorism or terrorization.*" If this definition does not apply to those who threaten and even kill ladies on their ways to abortion clinics, to whom should it apply then? When Buford Oneal Furrow went to a Jewish daycare center and shot innocent children in 1999 just because they were born of Jewish families, shouldn't he be called a terrorist? Isn't that an act in line with this definition? If that is not enough to make Furrow a terrorist, he reportedly said, at an FBI office in Las Vegas where he surrendered, that his attack on the Jewish daycare center was meant as a 'wake-up call to America to kill Jews.' How much does he have to do or say to be called a terrorist? Yet, another meaning of the word

terrorism is "*a terroristic method of governing or of resisting a government.*" It is not a secret that there are some organized groups that are against the government and, in some situations, resist the government in a way or another. Should we give examples of the dead ones to avoid the wrath, and swift illegitimate retribution, of the living ones? What about David Koresh? Has anyone associated his religion with terrorism, or investigated his religion as one that instigates terrorism? If we believe in Jesus, and believe that religion, rationality and reason call for 'eye for eye' and 'tooth for tooth', then we have to prove it by actions! We have to label as a terrorist anyone who takes the law on his own hands and kills a coherent innocent Muslims just because another 'so called' Muslim terrorized Americans. Such killer should also be as a terrorist. The irony is that such a person is seen and treated by some as patriotic. When a 'so called' Muslims terrorize anyone, other rational Muslims hate that person. I have yet to meet a Muslim who does not abhor, detest, and deplore the action of Major Nidal Malik Hasan, who in 2009 killed 19 and wounded 31 soldiers at Fort Hood Texas.

Muslims do not demand respect, their unquestionable patriotism should command patriotic American to treat them fairly. Unfortunately only a few Americans sympathize with unfairly treated Muslims and we have no idea what the silent majority think about the total bias against us. What amazes us is not the offence of the irrational ones, but rather, the silence of the majority. If the total bias against us is not a clear double standard, what is it then?

Double Standard One wonders how many people by the name of Buford, Andrew, Stack, Timothy, David, Eric, Jimmy, Terry, Nichols, Michael or Fortier were stopped at airports for further security inspections because their names match those of killers whose crimes are on the record. KILLARS some officials do not even consider terrorists! If that is not double standard, what is it then?

For the sake of argument, let us assume that TDS intelligent systems were trained using names of all known and suspected terrorists. How can we then justify consistent security securitizations of Muslims who had never ever been associated with terrorism let alone committed any? One may argue that even late senator Edward Kennedy was once selected for further scrutiny. However, that took place once and never ever happened again. How would you feel if no one with a name similar to yours has ever committed terrorization, and certainly you haven't, yet the TDS system picks on you every time you travel? On the other hand, when a person knows that he/she has never hurt anyone in his/her life, yet the TDS system picks him/her every time they travel, how would that person feel about such a system and the operators of the system? How would that person feel about the constitutional equality in this country? How would he feel about the moral foundations of America and the values of equality and respect that these foundations were built to support? For a Muslim, double standard has become a fact of life. For others, who apply double standards, they do so believing that it is a way of combating terrorism, what a logic!

Perfect Planning To combat terrorism, the number one country in sciences and technology in the globe should have well studies plans. Perfect planning is impossible. We understand that it is impossible for any system to be perfect. However, it stands to logic that a system that is intended to be smart must meet certain criterion to deserve being called smart. If a smart system continues to falsely identify people as potential terrorists, then the system must be redesigned. We will

refer in this document to cases of "false identification" of a person as a possible terrorist by the term "false positive". On the other hand, we will classify as "false negative" cases where a system falsely misses identifying a potential terrorist as such.

When it comes to suspecting a person of violation of the law, our constitution assumes the person is innocent unless proven guilty. This constitutional article by all accounts forces TDS systems to always operate in the false negative mode, which defeats the purpose for which they were designed. Conversely, when TDS systems operate mostly in the false positive mode, they violate the equality the constitution emphasizes. Outrageously, the existing TDS systems seem to operate in the false negative mode for those with non-Muslim names, and only switch to the false positive mode when triggered by a passenger whose name is that of a Muslim. The TDS system in this case not only violates the Muslim's rights once, but twice. The first is for falsely accusing him/her of being a potential terrorist and the second is for switching to a discriminating mode of operation that is biased against names common to Muslims only. In general, whenever there is uncertainty, a Muslim is likely to get the 'guilty' verdict while others get the benefit of the doubt. What does Islam say about doubted judgments in ambiguous cases?

Islam and ambiguity: In ambiguous cases Islam expects a jurist to make a mistake in voting for a 'not guilty' verdict any time when the only other alternative is to make a mistake by voting for a guilty verdict. Equally, if a judge is not sure about whether a person deserves punishment or not, he/she will have to choose one of two options: either mistakenly sentence the person for punishment or mistakenly forgive the accused person and dismiss punishment. Islam expects the judge, in such a case, to mistakenly forgive the suspected person.

Such is the case with individuals because Islam is the religion of justice for all and so are the revealed Christianity and Judaism. All revealed religions protect all the rights of individuals. Obviously the rights of Muslims in the US are not protected post September 11. The question that follows is: were Muslims' rights really protected before September 11? The answer is certainly no because pre-September 11 discrimination was not conducted on broad day light. However, post September 11 discrimination was, and continues to be publically carried out under the pretext of protecting the American public. That is because 'Muslims killing us on 9/11', the comment by Bill O'Reilly. A comment that forced fellow guests who are logical, reasonable and rational to storm off set on 'The View'. Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1320642/Bill-OReilly-Whoopi-Goldberg-Joy-Behar-storm-The-View-9-11-comment.html#ixzz1Kudgk1Fv>.

Another post September 11 discrimination is embedded in the statement 'Islamic Centers must be eradicated' according to a voted public official. Another such statement is 'more than 70% of Imams (Muslim Clerics) are extremists', a statement some quote a congressman saying during a hearing. Can the same people say why they discriminate against Muslims when only 5% of the post September 11 terrorist attacks were committed by Muslims? Such data is from the FBI website for years from the mid-eighties to 2005. What about those who committed the 95% of the terrorization acts during this period?

As a matter of fact, it is not only the TDS systems that discriminate against Muslims. Even the government policies are discriminatory against them. However, we attribute government discriminating policies to their trust in the untrustworthy. Our government has been consistently falling victims of misinformation. Yes, the government was misinformed about Iraq in 2003. The publicly elected official who called for hearing to eradicate Islamic Centers was misinformed about Muslims. The law enforcement agents and the FBI in many instances have been misinformed about Muslims. The airliner which refused to board six Imams in Minnesota has been misinformed about them. And obviously the TDS systems have been ill-programmed, or should I say, misinformed about Muslim named passengers.

We do not claim the knowledge of judges or lawyers. Nevertheless, we can witness to the fact that the constitution of our country has the spirit of Islam. Islam says when a vile person comes to with news you must investigate the news to avoid harming people falsely and then regret your actions later. Our constitution also spells the same spirit. Did we investigate the informants who mislead our government about Iraq causing our secretary of state to apologize for having based his arguments for war against Iraq on false premises? Did the congressman who called for the hearing about the danger of Muslims investigate his informants? Has the authority in our country thoroughly investigated their informants before committing false positive gaffe?

Since our courts rely on either direct or circumstantial evidences to decide on cases against individuals, why didn't our county rely on at least circumstantial evidences before making mistakes they later regretted? Should our government hold accountable those who mislead us and caused us to go on war? Why are we as Americans hated by other nations? Is there any relationship between those who mis-inform our government and the hate we are experiencing? Someone has to investigate those who have been mis-informing our government. We suspect that there is a pattern common to all of the so called informants who mislead the government. Some of the common blueprints may include personal interests, revenge, hate of ones own culture and hypocritical over-exaggeration of patriotism to the US.

In conclusion, I will say that there are a few English words that we spend a lot of time trying to understand because we did not live the implied meaning thereof. Among these words is 'homesickness.' As naturalized citizens, we do not feel home-sick since living in the US is living at home a way from homes we were born in. Nonetheless, some of our fellow Americans are leading us to live in a state of "homophobia" in the same state we chose as our eventual home. Homophobia for an American Muslim returning from a trip to a foreign country is caused by fear of mistreatment by airport immigration authorities. It is also caused by the fear of profiling by some troopers while driving on the road and the fear of investigation by the FBI. Consequently, homophobia is caused by airport-o-phobia, police-o-phobia, and FBI-phobia. We admit to the fact that the US is the best place for us to live in and that is why we made it home. We also admit that the vast majority of American citizens, whether Christians or Jews or others, are wonderful to be with and live among.