

Q&A WITH AN ISLAMOPHOBE©

Concise responses to counter irrational Islamophobia

SIDDIQ BAZARWALA

Book Cover Layout & Design: Kevin Tsam, Jet Bright Hong Kong
Typeset by Hewer Text UK Ltd, Edinburgh

First Published in 2017 by Ordinary Muslim Productions
www.ordinarymuslimproductions.com

ISBN 978-988-78033-1-7

Copyright © Siddiq Bazarwala

Siddiq Bazarwala has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and is to be identified as the author of this work.

All Rights Reserved

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, or otherwise) without the prior permission of the Publisher, Ordinary Muslim Productions except in the case of brief quotations to Letters to the Editors, Open-Editorials, Online and TV interviews to clarify the true position of Islam and ordinary Muslims.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library, U.K as well as Library of Congress, U.S.A

To support actionable research aimed at reviving self-confidence among ordinary Muslims worldwide, visit ordinarymuslimproductions.com

I was inspired to write this book every moment thinking about *Humza*, *Yaseen* and *Musa*, my three boys who at this tender age remain unaware about the irrational yet toxic Islamophobia commonplace today as well as tens of millions of other children, Muslims and non-Muslims alike who unfortunately are. This is me teaching my children the “pen is mightier than the sword” so that you and your generation of Muslims will bring irrational Islamophobia to an absolute minimum, if my generation fails.

I would also like to dedicate this book to our Jewish cousins that remained committed to their identity by wearing the kippa when outdoors despite the inherent risks of being singled out in unprovoked attacks, Sikhs that wear the turban as well as Hindus, Arab Christians, Caribbean and black Africans who are sometimes wrongly targeted during anti-Muslim attacks.

Last but not least, with envy and admiration in equal portion, Muslim women the world over who face double bind discrimination while seeking employment and yet have not given up wearing the hijab (arguably the strongest symbol of resistance) despite being particularly vulnerable to verbal taunts, bullying and enduring all kinds of unconscionable abuse daily including physical attacks.

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Acknowledgement	xiii
Q&A with an Islamophobe	xix
Common Non-Muslim Viewpoint	I
Defining Islamophobia	3
“Reformed” or Ex-Muslims	13
Muhammad (PBUH) & Islamophobes then	17
Most terrorists are Muslims . . .	22
Counter-terrorism policies fuelling Islamophobia	46
Muslims Support ISIS	54
Head-chopping & suicide bombings among Muslims	62
“Islamic” violence over the last 50–100 years	66
Muslims want to kill all non-Muslims	71
Anti-immigrant citizens of the West	80
Q&A with a Radicalised “Muslim”	91
Q&A with an Atheist	95
Condemn or be damned	103
Charlie Hebdo, Muslims & Freedom of Speech	110
Lighten up, Muslims	118
The Media	126
Muslim-majority countries remain backwards	137
Anti-feminism within Islam	139
Islam on Homosexuality	153
Blasphemy in Islam	158
Apostasy in Islam	161
China, India & Burma: Islamophobia’s Next Frontier	165
Middle East’s “Kumidia Alaktha (Comedy of Errors)	179
The Sunni-Shia Debacle	190
Minorities in Muslim-majority countries	194
Most misunderstood by Muslims	196
Blaming the “Mullahs”	199
Plea to every single ordinary Muslim worldwide	202
Fighting Islamophobia: Sample strategies	211
Global brand building for Muslims and Islam	218
Conclusion	223
Can a book change the world?	241
Epilogue	243
Biography	245
Index	252

PREFACE

You were hoping in your heart this day would never come. In the back of your mind however, you knew this was inevitable. Someone with a Muslim name would commit a horrendous act of terror in the name of Islam, either citing verses from the Qur'an or while invoking the name of Allah and people the world over will react in ways that you dread most.

The next morning, a colleague will say something in passing at your workplace or even worse, your child will come home from school sheepishly telling you how children in his or her class briefly discussed about the latest "incident" and how the discussion stereotypically ended with someone in class blaming Islam and 1.6 billion Muslims for the misguided actions of these individuals, leaving your child confused about his or her real identity and most worryingly, planting of the poisonous seed of doubt in your child's mind as to whether there is indeed something wrong with Islam.

As our children are continuously exposed to this barrage of ill-informed criticism at school and among their circle of friends and their parents who pretend to be liberals and inclusive in public but in private, talk of Islam and ordinary Muslims as a key problem in Western society, it won't be long before our children grow up wondering if there indeed is something about Islam that leads inexorably to violence, terrorism and subjugation of women.

Alternatively, imagine having the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) mocked and insulted by a group of individuals who were later killed by another group of fascist men calling themselves Muslims. Next day, children in school are asked to participate in school projects or ceremonies to demonstrate unity and solidarity. There are Muslim children who albeit confused, unwillingly participate

to avoid being singled out while there is one child who simply refuses on the grounds that he found what the individuals who mocked Muhammad (PBUH) did offensive, although agree how the perpetrators reaction was many times over, indisputably wrong. Yet, that Muslim child is consequently shone the spotlight in class and used as an exhibit as someone who is not “loyal to the country”. This incident actually took place following the Charlie Hebdo attacks.

Spanning an almost three-year period since reaching my tipping point, I have researched over 200 most vile, widely debunked and yet variedly repeated Islamophobic comments levelled against ordinary Muslims today by self-gratifying renowned Islamophobes, anti-Muslim groups, talk-show hosts, presidential candidates and right-wing politicians let alone misinformed ordinary citizens of the West who harbour anti-Muslim sentiments, either out of intolerance or ignorance.

“Thanks” to them, I was forced to learn and re-learn Islam so as to see how 10 out of ten times, statements laced with their double standards contain baseless accusations about Islam and ordinary Muslims. This book is a collection of these remarks and more importantly, long overdue counter-points responding to the oft-repeated Islamophobic statements increasingly commonplace today.

To ensure I stayed on course, I have included in this book a clear black-and-white definition of Islamophobia. Acknowledging how some Muslim individuals or Muslim-majority countries may hide behind the banner of Islamophobia to deflect criticism, I have at the beginning of this book, included Q&As calling on Muslims to avoid letting such so-called Muslim-majority countries or Muslims with specific agendas hijack the battle against Islamophobia by abusing it like the Holocaust industry (Q8-Q11). An industry that is closely influenced by an elite group of powerful Jews and political actors in Israel, America and England today with an irrefutable history of labelling all forms of criticism against Israel as Anti-Semitic. The short but important chapter “Defining Islamophobia” is one of many such examples in this book.

At a personal level if you wish for your child to grow up and genuinely understand one-fourth of humanity, I hope you and your children find the honest contents of this book refreshingly frank and useful.

Essentially, this cycle of hate and counter-hate needs breaking and every parent (Muslim or non-Muslim alike) need to start by ensuring these lone-wolf extremists or terror groups let alone the sheer malevolence of bigots and Islamophobes who seek to divide us is not allowed to fester and grow on our watch or else the impending crisis will make our current global chaos seem trifling.

In the words of political essayist Juan Cole: “Extremism thrives on other people’s extremism, and is inexorably defeated by tolerance.” We could all learn from this, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

DEFINING ISLAMOPHOBIA

3. “PHOBIA” IS DEFINED AS FEAR – SO ISLAMOPHOBIA IS FEAR OF ISLAM. GIVEN ALL THAT IS HAPPENING, WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE FEAR OF ISLAM OR ISLAMOPHOBIA?

Fear of Islam is not the problem. The problem occurs when this hatred cloaked in fear becomes irrational in spite of the real, easily verifiable facts available about Islam and ordinary Muslims today from respectable, independent and best selling non-Muslim sources, that are often overlooked. By ignoring these indisputable facts and relying instead on hate-inciting, fear mongering sources, we are left with irrational Islamophobia, which is the irrational hatred veiled as fear for Islam and ordinary Muslims.

4. SO CRITICISING ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IS ISLAMOPHOBIA.

No, not really.

In the words of a widely respected American Jew on the definition of Islamophobia:

Criticism of Islam is not an Islamophobic act in itself, so long as that criticism is accompanied with some kind of intellectual rigour. An Islamophobic act is one that portrays Islam, and therefore Muslims, as a threat. Islamophobes perpetuate the myth that Muslims are plotting to overtake the West, overturn our democratic institutions, and then implement Sharia. That's Islamophobia, and no different than saying, “Jews are plotting to overtake the world,” which it was, not coincidentally,

a Nazi generated trope. (*Source: Islamophobes perpetuate the myth that Muslims are plotting to overtake the West, 8 April 2017, CJ Werleman, Muslim Press*)

5. MUSLIMS HAVE AN ENLARGED SENSE OF VICTIMHOOD AND LOVE TO EXAGGERATE ANTI-MUSLIM SENTIMENTS.

With over 101 anti-Muslim hate groups in America, out of 917 total hate groups, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that tracks hate crimes in the country, anti-Muslim hate crimes and varying forms of discrimination stemming from public policy and political speech is real.

“Anti-Islamic rhetoric is not difficult to come by . . . It’s unfortunately prolific and so numerous that I didn’t even bother to find examples. You can just Google it.” (*Source: Stop Criminalizing Children of Color for Being Children by Heather Hamel, 22 September 2015, The Huffington Post*)

In the words of “The Islamophobia Project” started by the Huffington Post: “It’s when a Muslim mom tells her daughter to maybe not wear the hijab today. It’s a Muslim father having to explain to his children that no, they’re citizens, they can’t be deported. It’s how almost every Muslim in a movie is depicted as a terrorist, and it’s why cable news channels only ask Muslims if they condemn terrorism”. (*Source: 6 Rules Of Islamophobia In America, Christopher Mathias, 23 January 2017, The Huffington Post*)

6. BUT YOU MUSLIMS CRY FOUL AND SCREAM ISLAMOPHOBIA AT EVERY TURN.

Those that scream “Islamophobia” as soon as anything critical is leveled at Muslims are unfortunately stumbling down the same dark alleyway the power brokers within the Holocaust industry trail-blazed decades ago. Granted, the media discourse over Islam and ordinary Muslims today indeed resembles the manner in which Jews were vilified a hundred

years ago but not all negative criticisms directed towards ordinary Muslims should be labelled Islamophobia.

Irrational Islamophobia is not about criticising Islam and Muslims which everyone is free to engage in but is about repeating false data and information in written, verbal or audio form – already repeatedly discredited by reputable, credible scholars, academics and experts and not disseminated by fear-mongering, hate-inciting talking heads and publicity hungry talk-show hosts.

Put simply, criticising ordinary Muslims isn't Islamophobia however repeating already discredited statements and myths about Muslims and Islam is. As French philosopher Albert Camus once said: "Misnaming things adds to the misfortunes of the world".

Therefore an Islamophobe is someone who prefers to incite hatred and fear in the hearts and minds of people by conflating fact with hyperbole fiction. Not someone who criticises Muslims.

7. HOW CAN MUSLIMS EVER COMPARE THEMSELVES TO WHAT THE JEWS WENT THROUGH 100 YEARS AGO?

Prior to the Holocaust, the Nazi propaganda machine spoke about the "Jewish problem" and how allegedly the Jewish community was organized in a diabolical scheme for world domination, and that Jews were liars and could not be trusted or be loyal to the state. Those are verbatim the same arguments that we hear made against Muslims today and which far too many Americans [and Europeans] find acceptable. It is the same hate with a new target . . . In both cases, masses of otherwise reasonable people, were and are misled by leaders to demonize an entire group of people and portray them as a threat. The "threat" is fabricated using outright lies, half-truths, and double standards. (*Source: Facts about Muslim faith ignored as fear-mongering, fabrications spread by Hassan Shibly, chief executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Florida 9 March 2016, Brandenton Herald*)

In the words of a notable American Jew and a prolific writer, CJ Werleman:

Look back at Nazi Germany – they didn't start killing Jews on day one. The German public would've never accepted systematic violence against Jews in 1932. It took eight years of unrelenting anti-Semitism in the media and elsewhere before crimes against Jewish populations became normal and acceptable behavior. (*Source: Islamophobes perpetuate the myth that Muslims are plotting to overtake the West, 8 April 2017, Muslim Press*)

Therefore when examined closely, it becomes clear the same misinformation strategy was used on the Jews and thus, enabled otherwise normal human beings to collaborate with the Nazis and starve, torture and kill millions of innocent Jews by stripping away the individuality of every Jew and manufacture chambers full of inexplicable hatred into death. History must not repeat itself.

8. OKAY BUT THE ISRAELIS ARE SOMETIMES KNOWN TO DEFLECT ACCOUNTABILITY BY LABELLING ANY CRITICISM AS ANTI-SEMITIC. AREN'T MUSLIMS TODAY DOING THE SAME THING?

Has this accusation ever stopped any self-respecting media platforms from reigning in their criticisms about Islam or Muhammad (PBUH)? Never. In fact, how many credible and unbiased media reports can you find that attest to how the media is failing to shine the spotlight on Islam today? None.

If there is one religion that receives far too much unfair, unbalanced and negative coverage, it is Islam. As a result, you are now beginning to find small but emerging number of articles and news clips criticising the media for unfairly putting the spotlight only on Islam and brushing all ordinary Muslims with the same tar – and in comparison, less so on people of other faiths, states, ideologies and failed foreign policies. Therefore the claim that Muslims are shielding themselves behind the accusation of calling its critic, “bigots and Islamophobes” carries little factual merits.

Little not zero factual merits – because there are admittedly instances where bigotry and Islamophobia are exploited by some so-called Muslim countries to deflect criticism for discriminatory laws in places

like Saudi Arabia, (Aceh) Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria and elsewhere. Often times, these laws are falsely implemented in the name of Islam for political expediency and for this, so-called Muslim-majority countries need to be held to account and foreign media coverage ought to be vigorous and balance.

“As secular campaigner Austin Darcy puts it: “The ultimate aim of this effort is not to protect the feelings of Muslims, but to protect illiberal Islamic states from charges of human rights abuse, and to silence the voices of internal dissidents calling for more secular government and freedom”. (Source: *Why should I respect these oppressive religions?* on 28 January 2009 by Johann Hari, *The Independent*)

9. WHY THEN DOES IT SEEM MUSLIMS ARE USING ISLAMOPHOBIA AS A CATCH ALL PHRASE TO SILENCE ANYONE CRITICAL OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS?

Islamophobia is to repeat previously discredited myths and conflating fact with fiction when it comes to Muslims and Islam. Criticising Muslims is not Islamophobia nor is criticising a Muslim-majority country Islamophobia.

Where even the slightest signs of “Islamophobia” misuse appears, especially by some Muslim-majority countries in cases related to apostasy, blasphemy or honour killings among other issues, ordinary Muslims young and old, male and female should openly condemn these Muslim-majority countries for misrepresenting Islamic shariah (for example, jailing victims of rape) and tailoring their beliefs, especially if they ever tried deflecting any form of criticism by misusing the shield of Islamophobia.

This is all the more the case even if this means one runs the risk of being labeled a “self-hating Muslim”. Besides, how can we, ordinary Muslims not condemn something that is in direct contradiction to the decisions taken by none other than Muhammad (PBUH) himself? In his lifetime, not a single person was hanged, beheaded or killed as a result of apostasy and blasphemy so whoever does it now (in the absence of a true,

equitable Islamic state) cannot possibly be following the religion of Muhammad (PBUH), says unqualified sheikh yours truly, given how this should no doubt be the start and end of an irrefutable argument.

10. SO IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO CRITICISE ISLAM, MUSLIMS AND MUSLIM-MAJORITY COUNTRIES WITHOUT BEING ACCUSED OF HATING EVERY MUSLIM?

Granted, the idea behind Islamophobia can sometimes be abused by some Muslim-majority countries to shield themselves from criticism of their misuse of Islamic shariah (opinion of Islamic law) for example, in matters relating to women's rights to drive or open a bank account to beheadings, apostasy and blasphemy.

Often times, the action of these so-called Islamic countries is a deviation from the true teachings of Islam and yet by employing the banner of Islamophobia, they dishonestly deflect criticisms directed at them, straight out of the playbook pioneered by generation after generation of astute politicians within the State of Israel. Politicians who will deflect any criticism against Israel wasting no time labelling it as an act of Anti-Semitism instead of what it actually is:

Criticism of Israel's foreign policy when it comes to the illegal occupation, settlement expansion and extra-judicial killings of ordinary indigenous Palestinians among a long list of other injustices.

On both fronts, this should be roundly condemned by ordinary Muslims the world over.

11. BEING MUSLIM IS A NOT A RACE SO WHEN CRITICISING MUSLIMS, HOW CAN WE BE BRANDED RACIST?

Yes, Islam itself as a religion does not denote a race since Muslims come from almost every racial and ethnic grouping in the world. There are Indonesians Muslims as well as Arabs, Chinese, Australians, Indians,

Africans, Turks, Canadians, Hispanics as well as white Americans and Europeans among countless of other ethnicities that represent Islam today but when it comes to Islam and Muslims, statements made on TV and in news report are usually sensational or distorted and reporting is often deeply “racist”. The actions of a certain race for example Arabs, is evenly applied on all other Muslims across the world.

Therefore, “racist” not in the conventional sense given how not a single race can represent Islam or Muslims. In the words of Dr. Anne Aly, Australia’s first female Muslim MP who says it best:

Because (attacks on Muslims) have the same motivations as racism and the same impacts of racism. If you look at its mobilisers then you would consider hate speech against Muslims, racism. (*Source: This Muslim Politician Nailed Why The “Islam Is Not A Race” Argument Doesn’t Work Is it racist?, Mark Di Stefano, 2 April 2017, BuzzFeed*)

12. WHY WOULD ANY RESPECTED AND WIDELY FOLLOWED CELEBRITY, POLITICIAN, TV ANCHOR OR AUTHOR LIE ABOUT MUSLIMS AND ISLAM?

According to Fear, Inc., 2.0, an in-depth report published by the Center for American Progress, there are organizations in the United States with clear malevolent motives, which they in fact often openly state. These have to do with their fundamental desire for more aggressive U.S. foreign policies and providing the rationale for the ever-growing national security state.

In fact, the most common tactic of Islamophobes is to use the most extreme of examples to get attention and solicit funds. Others unapologetically court controversy to raise their TV or radio ratings, sell more books, increase social media following or secure the media limelight to gain lucrative speaking engagements. Rarely does it matter the statements are based on lies, paraded as facts. It is simply about sensationalism and generating more views for the website, media platform or other wealth generating tool that is, books, talk-shows or other publicity platforms.

In fact, the more outrageous and belligerent a commentator is these days, the higher the following of that individual. The rarely unspoken reason to make such hate-filled, often debunked controversial statements is to boost the sale of his or her books or to facilitate a spike in his or her TV or radio ratings, if not run for the office of the President of the United States, as evidenced by recent events.

13. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE COMMON CHARACTERISTICS AND KNOWN STRATEGY OF AN ISLAMOPHOBE?

A leading number of them may outwardly seem perfectly ordinary, eloquent and even funny but in fact hold views that are out of touch with reality, inhumanely ignorant and toxic. Since a lie told often enough ends up feeling true, the tactic of repeating widely debunked anti-Islamic rhetoric and Islamophobic trope is the most effective form of politically-useful bigotry employed by these individuals for cheap applause.

Relying on a deceptive and dishonest propaganda strategy focusing on a broad range of Islamic and non-Islamic issues, ranging from feminist movements, terrorism, Islam and Christianity, these hatemongers peddle negative, unqualified and misinformed messages to sow discontent and fear in the hearts and minds of non-Muslims who watch and follow their programmes down the rabbit hole of unjustified assumptions and disastrous conclusions, implicitly backing the anti-Muslim bigotry – all in the name of bottomless dumbing down entertainment.

Serving as examples, an anti-Muslim hate group might purchase advertising space for anti-Islam messages but when the publisher rejects the business on account of its hateful content, the group will then file a suit for allegedly violating their free speech rights, as part of its lawfare strategy. Regardless of who wins the legal challenge, the controversy generates the much-coveted publicity. Soon after the case is dismissed in the local court, little time is wasted spinning the outcome as “a rigged system” or the absurd, “victory for shariah in America”.

Other common methods include “self-anointed activists” fighting

against “creeping shariah” by obstructing the building of community centers and mosques, and dragging town hall meetings into court rooms so as to deliberate anti-Islam talking points in the court of law. Even in cases where religious equality perseveres and the case is thrown out of court, the endgame of the Islamophobia network is to pollute the public discourse by conflating a tinge of facts with gallons of misinformation and when handed a loss, disreputably claim “infiltration of Islam” or “victory of jihad”, paying zero attention to the misuse of words and its real meanings.

Last but not least is the ultimate red herring strategy, which is a nationwide campaign to stop shariah law from ever being introduced in countries like America by enacting new statutes or constitutional amendments to prevent the introduction of non-American or British laws. Never mind how shariah law dictates a Muslim should obey the law of the country they live in, thus advocating nothing short of strong national pride but this is beside the point. The end-goal is to defame Muslims and Islam through ballot and votes, using sheer paranoia and red herring defeating a non-existent threat and riding the wave of publicity from the news coverage it generates.

14. BUT MUSLIMS WANT THE SHARIAH LAW TO REPLACE LAWS IN THE WEST.

The fear of Shariah law in the West is completely unwarranted and a total red herring, best illustrating how the irrational Islamophobia industry thrives by spreading untruths about Islam and beliefs of ordinary Muslims.

In Islam, Muslims follow the Qur’an (divine revelation) and Hadiths (narrated sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), making them legally binding texts for all Muslims. Meanwhile, Shariah (law opined by Islamic scholars based on their understanding of the Qur’an and Hadith) is the interpretation of statements and principles from the Qur’an and Hadith and varies from place to place. It covers marriage, divorce, inheritance and punishments for criminal offenses among a divergent range of issues.

Every verdict, is however open to interpretation. Not only do ordinary Muslims from different countries across the world sometimes have a different Shariah opinion on a single given subject, scholars themselves can reach widely different conclusions based on their understanding of the Qur'an and Hadiths.

As an example, Shariah calls for Muslims to be honest, be kind to orphans and widows and donate money to charity. On these matters, there is of course less room to manoeuvre since every Muslim is expected to be nothing short of being honest, kind and donate as much as possible to the poor. Therefore, when a Muslim is kind and honest and gives money to charity, he is not only following the Qur'an and Hadith but also following the Shariah.

Put another way, to ask Muslims to disavow Shariah is like asking a Christian to renounce the Bible because for example it calls for women to be stoned to death if she is not a virgin at the time of wedding. Shariah also provides a framework under which circumstances a Muslim is allowed to divorce, participate in a war and decide on inheritance matters. Here, opinions can be divergent given the number of factors that could come into play. You will therefore not find a single book on Shariah because the rulings vary from country to country influenced by social, economic and cultural factors.

Like the tax law of a given country, only specialists that is, Islamic scholars with in-depth knowledge of both the Qur'an and Hadith are best able to diagnose the best Shariah law for a given situation. Again, these non-binding rulings differ from country to country.

Last but not least, a Muslim is divinely instructed in the Qur'an to abide by the rules of the country in which they live (4:59), which in effect nullifies any argument to sidestep local laws in place for one's interpretation of Shariah law.

MOST TERRORISTS ARE MUSLIMS . . .

22. NOT ALL MUSLIMS ARE TERRORISTS BUT MOST TERRORISTS ARE MUSLIMS.

A trite, statistically and factually false cliché that could not be further from the truth.

In the 2017 U.S. Government Accountability Office report tracking deadly terror attacks in America, it found far-right extremists have killed more people in America between 9/11 and 2016 than Muslim extremists. “Of the 85 violent extremist incidents that resulted in death since September 12, 2001, far-right groups were responsible for 62 (73 percent) while radical Islamist violent extremists were responsible for 23 (27 percent).” That’s a margin of almost three to one.

In a separate report titled “A Dark and Constant Rage” by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), it noted how rightwing extremists (85 percent of whom are anti-abortionists and anti-immigrant extremists) have been responsible for at least 150 acts of terror in America over the past 25 years, killing 255 people and injuring 600 more. The New America Foundation meanwhile has counted 11 attacks by Islamic extremists since 9/11, compared to 21 by far-right extremists.

Ninety six percent of domestic terrorism [in the U.S] is committed by white men. The exact figure is disputed, but all statistics have it at more than 90 percent. (*Source: Muslims Are Not Terrorists: A Factual Look at Terrorism and Islam by Omar Alnatour on 9 December 2015, Huffington Post*) Even the New York Times reported in 2015 that since Sept. 11, 2001, almost twice as many people have died at the hands of white supremacists, anti-government fanatics and other non-Muslim extremists than by radical Muslims.

While the numbers vary due to different methodologies, the writing on the wall is too plain to see.

Over the Atlantic in Britain, official statistics too, found 91 out of a total 260 people held on suspicion of terrorism offences were white, the highest number since 2003. White suspects made up 35 per cent – or again, one in three – of all terror related arrests in 2016, compared with 25 per cent in 2015. Home Office figures also showed 41 per cent of people who were investigated under anti-terror legislation between 2009 and 2016 were white.

It is however important to point out Muslim extremists, are more deadly in terms of the number of people killed in each of their attacks, yet far-right terrorists are far more active and consistent in carrying out deadly attacks on American soil, especially when one considers “41 percent of the deaths attributable to radical Islamist violent extremists occurred in a single event – the 2016 attack at Pulse night club in Orlando, Florida”. (*Source: Congress by the Government Accountability Office*)

Despite this, attacks by Muslims in America receive on average, about 4½ times more coverage than similar attacks by far right extremists. In other words, media coverage disproportionately emphasise the smaller number of terrorist attacks by Muslims, consequentially leading Americans to have an exaggerated sense of that threat, according to a recent Cato Institute report, a leading American public policy think tank.

Of course, counterbalancing savagery is never useful but it is often made to appear anybody making this obvious point is seeking to limit the responsibility of terrorism by Muslim extremists and its apologists when the unequivocal purpose should not only be to avoid downplaying the threat posed by Muslim extremists which is real but shine the much needed spotlight equally on the terror threat from far-right white extremist groups instead of not daring to speak its name.

Robert Fisk of the Independent Newspaper surmises it best: “If Muslims attack us, they are terrorists. If non-Muslims attack us, they are shooters. If Muslims attack other Muslims, they are attackers.” (*Source: We love to talk of terror – but after the Munich shooting, this*

hypocritical catch-all term has finally caught us out, Robert Fisk, 24 July 2016, The Independent), laying it bare the shifting goalposts when it comes to media reporting.

Thanks to the reliably biased media coverage and media timidity when it comes to the under-reporting of violence perpetrated by right-wing white extremists, there exist a vast difference between false public perception and the number of actual cases in which Muslim extremists or black Americans have claimed lives.

23. WHITE SUPREMACISTS KILL MORE PEOPLE THAN MUSLIMS – IF YOU DON’T COUNT THE 9/11 ATTACKS (3000 DEATHS) AND ORLANDO SHOOTINGS (49 DEATHS).

Sure but why start counting on 9/11 alone when white extremism and Muslim militancy has been a mainstay since the 1990s, if not earlier? Also, why not encompass the “nearly 4 million civilians killed during the War on Terror by America and its allies since 9/11”, according to the Center for Research on Globalisation?

24. THE ISSUE WITH MUSLIMS IS NOT BODY COUNT BUT INTENT. KILLINGS IN THE NAME OF ISLAM ARE USUALLY ACCOMPANIED BY SHOUTS OF “ALLAHU AKBAR” AND WHITE SUPREMACISTS “DON’T MURDER WHILE SHOUTING “JESUS IS LORD”.

When George W Bush launched his illegal invasion into Iraq, thus unleashing a Pandora’s box of events triggering regional upheaval and the loss of up to four million lives, he claimed “God spoke to him”, but are Christian leaders put on the dock for repeated questioning and endless condemnation?

In November 2015, an evangelical Christian, Robert Dear killed three and injured nine at an anti-abortion clinic in Colorado. He even

praised people who attacked abortion providers, saying they were doing “God’s work”. In court, he praised Army of God, a Christian terrorist group that is responsible for similar killings, such as Atlanta Olympic bomber Eric Rudolph, who also bombed a lesbian bar.

Then there is Reverend Paul Jennings (1994), Scott Roeder (2009), Micah Johnson (2016) and many other Christians with similar motives.

Does the name Robert Duggart ring a bell? It should but it’s unlikely you heard about him. Duggart, a Christian minister who wanted to carry out a mission for God, was arrested for planning to murder Muslims in Islamburg, New York, a primarily African American Muslim community. Duggart had hoped to kill the Muslims there using explosives, guns, and even a machete to cut the people “to shreds.” Duggart’s trial is currently scheduled for August . . . If Duggart had been a Muslim cleric plotting to slaughter Christians, does anyone doubt it would have made national news? (*Source: Coverage of the Istanbul Bombing Proves Once Again That American Media Care Little About Muslim Lives, Dean Obeidallah, 1 July 2016, Huffington Post*)

With white Christians accounting for the largest number of mass shootings in the US, do we demand the pope to condemn mass shootings every couple of days?

In India, Muslims are killed for allegedly slaughtering cows and eating beef, not by real Hindus but right-wing zealots who commit acts of violence in the name of their religion. In Israel, illegal settlers kill indigenous Palestinians believing God unequivocally gave Jews the West Bank, citing Genesis 13:14-17 but it is simply unfair to implicate Jewish leaders, Rabbis or Judaism for the crimes of those with an intolerant view of others.

Atheists do not escape scot-free either. The “anti-theist” Stephen Hicks from the January 2016 Chapel Hill shootings of three Muslims and Chris Harper from the Oregon killings of Christians, are two of many examples of anti-religious people who commit acts of violence but atheists collectively are never called to account, illustrating how religion is not always the cause for violence. Why?

White Americans are never asked to publicly condemn their actions but an unfair perpetual finger is pointed at Muslims demanding that

“moderate Muslims” deny, condemn and disavow (read: bow and scrape) to the world the actions of a minority of deviant Muslims who commit acts of violence. Why?

25. STILL, THE GUNMAN FROM THE PULSE NIGHTCLUB SHOOTING IN FLORIDA WAS A MUSLIM.

Scapegoating Islam is nothing but a cheap shot. Omar Mateen, an American born, did have a Muslim name but he drank alcohol, used to hit his ex-wife and reportedly was a homosexual himself. He pledged allegiance to ISIS (a group condemned by vast majority of Muslims) minutes before he went on a US home-grown hatred-filled shooting rampage. Is it really that difficult to see the obvious disconnect between his actions and Islam? Intriguingly, almost similar background conditions apply to Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, the convicted felon and truck driver in the Nice attack in France in July 2016, who “ate pork, drank alcohol and never went to the mosque”, according to his family.

In fact, mass shootings are not unique to Islam nor are they alien to America. There are over 300 each year. Recently, Esteban Santiago, a Christian and Iraq war veteran opened fire on unsuspecting travelers at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport in early January 2017, killing five and injuring six others. In a year before the shooting, he had at least five run-ins with police in Anchorage, Alaska. Yet no red flags were raised and not a single media report curiously attributed his mass shooting to domestic terrorism or religion.

Also, the same parallels can be drawn with the Paris Orly airport shooter (a Muslim drug addict with an extensive criminal record) in March 2017 and the white 17-year old French teenager (incidentally, son of a far-right French politician) who went on a shooting rampage a few days apart, armed with a rifle, a revolver, a pistol and grenades, in the southern French town of Grasse. One was immediately labelled a “terrorist act” while the other was “mentally disturbed”. No million-dollar prize for guessing which one was which.

26. IF YOU MUSLIMS REALLY BELIEVE IN PEACE, WHY ARE MUSLIMS ATTACKING AMERICA?

If an individual with a Muslim name commits an inhumane act of violence, it is instantaneously labeled “an act of terror” but if a gun-totting white person does the same, it is sidelined as a “criminal act” or he is classified as “mentally disturbed”.

“According to an affidavit from the FBI that was filed in federal court, Mr. Benjamin Thomas Samuel McDowell had told an undercover FBI agent he was interested in “doing something on a f***ing big scale” and writing “in the spirit of Dylann Roof” on the wall of the building where he would commit the killings. Roof who was only charged with a hate crime was sentenced to death in January 2017 for killing nine black churchgoers in Charleston but was not slapped with a terrorism charge.” (*Source: FBI: South Carolina man bought gun for attack “in the spirit of Dylaan Roof”, 16 February 2017, CBS News*), thus illustrating “terrorism can be committed by a person who doesn’t have a foreign-sounding name or brown skin”. Meanwhile, Glendon Scott Crawford is also another of many examples. Sentenced in December 2016 to 30 years in prison for trying to build a weapon of mass destruction to kill Muslim Americans, he was not charged with terrorism nor did we see wall-to-wall to media coverage about his case – something we would’ve likely witnessed if he were Muslim. (*Source: White supremacist gets 30 years prison for his plot to kill Muslims and Obama, 19 December 2016, Reuters*)

In fact, a report published in 2015 confirmed violence by white Americans since 9/11 is a much bigger threat for ordinary Americans than violence committed by Muslims. In the words of a rare but important media report itself:

“CNN’s Peter Bergen noted earlier this year [that is, 2014], since 9/11, extremists affiliated with a variety of far-right wing ideologies, including white supremacists, anti-abortion extremists and anti-government militants, have killed more people in the United States than have extremists motivated by al Qaeda’s ideology”. (*Source: A Cop Killing and a Beheading: How Fox News Picks and Chooses Its ‘Terrorism’ Targets on 30 Sept 2014 by Eric Boeblert, Media Matters for America*)

Therefore, to misrepresent Muslims as the enemy could not be further from the truth but at least in the short-term, this is not likely to change unless the media, politicians and right-wing groups stop conflating the actions of criminals (with a history of drug dealing, armed robbery, violence and/or theft) or misguided individuals with that of ordinary Muslims and Islam – and truthfully acknowledge the role and growing threat of far-right, white violence (read “terrorism”).

27. IF ISLAM IS ALL ABOUT PEACE, WHY ARE THERE SO MANY “LONE WOLF” ATTACKS COMING FROM MUSLIMS, EVEN IN PLACES OUTSIDE AMERICA?

In the following article published by The Star, based on documents by the Canadian intelligence agency (excerpts only), the excerpts focuses on how the notion of the Western world at war with Islam plays right into terrorist’ recruitment strategies.

“Lone wolf” attacks more often come from white supremacists and extreme right-wing ideologies than from Islamic radicalism, internal CSIS documents say. Citing recent academic research, the unclassified documents note extreme right-wing and white supremacist ideology has been the “main ideological source” for 17 per cent of so-called lone wolf attacks worldwide. Islamic extremism accounted for 15 per cent of such attacks, the document noted, while left-wing extremism and “black power” groups followed with 13 per cent. Anti-abortion activism (8 per cent) and nationalism/separatism (7 per cent) rounded out the list, while in 40 per cent of cases there was no clear ideological motivation. “Lone actors tend to create their own ideologies that combine personal frustrations and grievances, with wider political, social, or religious issues,” note the documents prepared for Michael Peirce, assistant director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service . . . “This study confirms that lone actor terrorism runs the gamut of ideological persuasions.” . . . The CSIS documents explicitly warn that the notion the Western world is at war with Islam plays into terrorist recruitment strategies. “International terrorist groups place a

high priority on radicalising Westerners who can be used to carry out terrorist attacks in their home countries,” the documents read. “The narrative that the West is at war with Islam continues to exert a very powerful influence in radicalising individuals and spreads quickly through social media and online foray.” . . . Ziyaad Mia, who has been following the government’s proposed new spy powers for the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association, said anti-Muslim sentiment in Canada is a growing concern, particularly in the context of the rhetoric from top government officials . . . “Some of this xenophobia is being stoked by political leaders. And I think that is a problem,” Mia told the Star . . . “Some of our political leaders need to tone that rhetoric down and actually calm people down . . . and tell people this is not the right way to go, instead of stoking the fears of xenophobia by talking about the war on terror and (that) we’re in this sort of apocalyptic conflict with the Islamic State.” (*Source: CSIS highlights white supremacist threat ahead of radical Islam by Alex Boutilier on Mar 15 2015, The Star*)

28. WHAT ABOUT THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE BY MUSLIMS IN EUROPE?

Here is another article (again, excerpts only) that debunks the myth “all the terrorists have been of Islamic background”:

Want to guess what percent of the terrorist attacks there were committed by Muslims over the past five years? Wrong. That is, unless you said less than 2 percent. As Europol, the European Union’s law-enforcement agency, noted in its report released last year, the vast majority of terror attacks in Europe were perpetrated by separatist groups. For example, in 2013, there were 152 terror attacks in Europe. Only two of them were “religiously motivated,” while 84 were predicated upon ethno-nationalist or separatist beliefs. We are talking about groups like France’s FLNC, which advocates an independent nation for the island of Corsica. In December 2013, FLNC terrorists carried out simultaneous rocket attacks against police stations in two French cities. And in Greece in late 2013, the left-wing Militant Popular Revolutionary Forces shot and killed two members of the right-wing political party

Golden Dawn. While over in Italy, the anarchist group FAI engaged in numerous terror attacks including sending a bomb to a journalist. And the list goes on and on. Have you heard of these incidents? Probably not. But if Muslims had committed them do you think you our media would've covered it? No need to answer, that's a rhetorical question. Even after one of the worst terror attacks ever in Europe in 2011, when Anders Breivik slaughtered 77 people in Norway to further his anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, and pro-“Christian Europe” agenda as he stated in his manifesto, how much press did we see in the United States? Yes, it was covered, but not the way we see when a Muslim terrorist is involved. Plus we didn't see terrorism experts fill the cable news sphere asking how we can stop future Christian terrorists. In fact, even the suggestion that Breivik was a “Christian terrorist” was met with outrage by many, including Fox News's Bill O'Reilly. (*Source: Are All Terrorists Muslims? It's Not Even Close by Dean Obeidallah on 14 January 2015 on Thedailybeast.com*)

29. REGARDLESS, MAJOR TERRORIST INCIDENTS ARE USUALLY PERPETRATED BY MUSLIMS.

While indeed big numbers, 52 innocent lives were lost on 7/7 in London while 22 lives were lost in Manchester in June 2017. In America, 49 people were killed at the Pulse nightclub Orlando shootings however, two out of three of the biggest mass killings over the last twenty years were carried out by far-right white Christian supremacists: Timothy McVeigh killing 168 in Oklahoma City in 1995, and Anders Breivik (a baptized Christian according to his 1500-page manifesto), killing 77 in Norway in 2011 – while the series of coordinated attacks across Paris in November 2015 led to the killings of 130 innocent civilians – and yet no one expects ordinary Christians to condemn terrorism in the same way Muslims are expected to?

In fact, it goes back to an often repeated but widely ignored fact that when a self-proclaimed Muslim commits an act of terror in the name of Islam, he is identified with his faith but if an atheist or a follower of another religion commits an act of terror, it is called just that, skewing

the overall number and perception of “terrorist” incidents against Muslims.

30. HOW CAN THE ROLE OF ISLAM BE DENIED IN RECENT TERROR ATTACKS?

“When George W. Bush told us that God called him to go to Iraq and when clergy blessed the war effort and when there has been no accountability for horrors of Abu Ghraib and torture or the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqis and thousands of Americans in what can only be described as a failed war based on a lie, have Christians been called upon to reexamine the principles of our faith?”. (*Source: Were the Murders at Charlie Hebdo Really About Islam? By James Zogby on 17 January 2015, Huffington Post*)

When a Muslim commits a terrorist act, his faith is always mentioned while people who bomb abortion clinics are not called Christian terrorists and the IRA are not called Catholic terrorists. When ISIS in Libya brutally beheads Ethiopian Christians, they are labeled Muslims but when Muslims in Central African Republic (CAR) facing death threats are forcibly converted to Christianity, according to Amnesty International, the finger is pointed at local militias rather than Christianity. Thousands died in violence and hundreds of thousands remain displaced from their homes following a March 2013 coup in CAR and yet Christian leaders are never asked to apologise. Muslims meanwhile are expected to condemn ISIS when the actions of ISIS have no basis in Islam.

Christians were also not expected to say sorry for the lone-wolf actions for the Oklahoma City bombing, yet Muslims are being constantly expected to condemn let alone apologise. Therefore, if the violent actions of individuals who call themselves Christians have nothing to do with Christianity, the actions of individuals with Muslim names or “lone-wolves” who commit acts of violence *also have nothing* to do with Islam. The motivations are political.

31. YOU SOUND LIKE YOU ARE JUSTIFYING TERROR ATTACKS. SUCH BARBARITIES HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH FOREIGN POLICY FAILURES.

It is astounding how one fails to see how the illegal Iraq invasion, war in Afghanistan and Libya, blanket support of hideous allies in the Middle East, the betrayal of Palestine, the complicity in extrajudicial killings and torture and ongoing deep prejudices, kick-started by neo-con opportunists well before 9/11 have made the world inflammable and unsafe today, a fact widely acknowledged by renowned intellectuals the world over such as Noam Chomsky.

This is not a justification of terror attacks in the West but a partial explanation to events unfolding today on our shores.

Terrorism as we know it today is unfortunately a response to misguided foreign policies of the West. But it is not simply about misguided foreign policies only, either. The seeds of terrorism are broadly planted by at least five divergent parties nurturing the growth of this evil.

These include: (1) misguided foreign policies and exploitation by leading Western governments with large defense industries that call themselves democracies (For example US, Europe among others); (2) Unnecessarily hatred-inciting and blatantly false statements about ordinary Muslims and Islam by right-wing politicians, right-wing media (Fox, Breitbart, etcetera,) and agenda-specific think-tanks; (3) Statements laced with double-standards and flagrantly misleading statements about ordinary Muslims and Islam by mainstream politicians that are in a position of power with real influence over public policy; (4) Biased mainstream media against ordinary Muslims and Islam (self-explanatory unless you have been living somewhere with no TV or internet connection); and (5) Self-professed Muslims (like ISIS that account for less than 0.03 percent of the Muslim population) who commit high profile acts of violence in the name of Islam or while invoking the name of Allah. They do what they do to create divisions in Western society and make the lives of Muslims in the West difficult so that Muslims in the West will be discriminated against as a result of

the anti-Muslim witch-hunt and pushed towards extremism with the eventual aim of entering their ranks. Therefore it is worth arguing, these self-professed bigots, with Muslim sounding names are actually set on inflicting more damage to Islam and ordinary Muslims than the four other groups mentioned above.

Put simply, the despicable effects of terrorism on Western civilian targets is often in response to misguided foreign policies in the Middle East, drone attacks targeting militants but causing untold innocent civilian casualties blowing body parts to bits, blind support of Arab dictators among a long list of reasons that sometimes lead to some form of a blowback in the form of terrorism, which when it arrives on our shores, quickly turns into anti-Muslim sentiments leading to what has now become the frequent anti-Muslim witch-hunt in the West.

In the end however, the false narratives, are not only immoral but also provide ammunition to the terrorists. Worse still, they make us all targets by playing directly into the hands of the propaganda that aims to divide and destroy us. Instead, it may be worth trying to marginalize this threat now not by framing religion as a threat but as a tool to end terrorism by battling against the incessant culture of falsification and witch-hunt against Islam and ordinary Muslims today, something misinformation, drones and Islamophobia has only made worse.

32. STILL, WHITE TERRORISM IS NOT WHAT IT IS OFTEN MADE OUT TO BE.

What terror plots on Muslim Americans?, you might be asking. Well that's part of the problem . . . There's Glendon Scott Crawford, [a former navy veteran] and a Klan member, who was convicted [in August 2015] in federal court for trying to "acquire a radiation weapon for mass destruction" to kill Muslim Americans in New York State. He was convicted [in December 2016 and sentenced to 30 years in life imprisonment], but we didn't see many national headlines for this story . . . Does the name Robert Daggart ring a bell? It should but it's unlikely you heard about him. Daggart, a Christian minister who wanted to carry out a mission for God, was arrested for planning to

murder Muslims in Islamburg, New York, a primarily African American Muslim community. Doggart had hoped to kill the Muslims there using explosives, guns, and even a machete to cut the people “to shreds.” Doggart’s trial is currently scheduled for August . . . If Doggart had been a Muslim cleric plotting to slaughter Christians, does anyone doubt it would have made national news? (*Source: Coverage of the Istanbul Bombing Proves Once Again That American Media Care Little About Muslim Lives, Dean Obeidallah, 1 July 2016, Huffington Post*)

Ryan Giroux had white supremacist tattoos on his neck and face, only one news station bothered to mention that. So where are his accomplices? Why weren’t his parents, his family, his business acquaintances, anyone remotely related to him being carted off for questioning? Where was the FBI when you needed them? Why is it that a day after the attacks, the story was already petering from the news? That most of my friends and relatives in other states hadn’t even heard about it until I told them? . . . Was it because his name wasn’t Muhammad? Khan? Umar? Was it because he wasn’t “Muslim” or Black or Colored? . . . I didn’t blink twice at my white co-workers, didn’t question them. It was obvious to me they had nothing to do with the violence going on outside, no affiliation, and there was no reason to connect them to it. (*Source: I Survived a Terrorist Attack And The Terrorist Wasn’t Muslim, Hira Ismail, 10 June 2016, MuslimGirl*)

33. BUT MUSLIMS ARE CONFUSING WHITE VIOLENCE WITH MENTAL INSTABILITY.

When a gun-totting “white” American goes on a rampage killing two dozen-odd people at a school, he is “mentally unstable” or when a self-proclaimed atheist kill Muslims (for example, students at UNC-Chapel Hill in February 2015), it takes the mainstream media 17 hours after the shooting to cover the event, hesitating all the while to call it what it is: a hate-crime, exposing the sickening double standards at play. However, when a person with a Muslim name (with clear links to criminal gang violence) living in the West commits a similar act of violence killing 1-2 people for example during the Copenhagen shootings in

February 2015 or the Westminster UK 2017 attack killing 2-4 people, he is immediately labelled a “terrorist”, when he is no less “mentally unstable”.

In the ever-piercing words of Dr. Suzanne Barakat: “If roles were reversed and an Arab Muslim . . . had killed three white American college students, execution-style, in their home, what would we have called it?” (*Source: Islamophobia killed my brother. Let’s end the hate, Ted Talks, 2016*)

When accused of terrorism we are Muslims and when killed by deranged criminals, we become Asian. Basically, when Muslims are the victims, we are called ethnic this or that, and never quite Muslims but when an individual with a Muslim name commits an act of violence, Islam suddenly becomes part of that identity. Why is that?

34. ONE CAN FIND HORRIBLE STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT BUT WE DON’T HAVE CHRISTIANS BELIEVING THEY MUST HURT, KILL, RAPE OR HARM OTHER PEOPLE.

May I remind you about the Crusades where 920 years ago, Pope Urban II referred to nonbelievers such as Muslims and Jews as the enemy and where hundreds of thousands of men embarked on war in the name of God, as they reveled in their slaughter. In his noteworthy book, *The Crusades* notable historian Geoffrey Hindley wrote:

“Crusaders were riding up to their bridle reins in blood at the Dome of the Rock and called the massacre a splendid judgment of God”. More recently, we should never forget how no one else but an indifferent Christian Europe was responsible for the Holocaust.

Furthermore, over 4,250 blacks were lynched, outside churches on Sundays by the Klu Klux Klan, a self-professed Christian organization. Also since 9/11, nearly twice as many people have been killed by white Christian supremacists and not Muslims, according to New America, a Washington research center.

In fact, all the killings of abortion clinic doctors are nothing short of “Christian” terrorism if the religion of the murderer is to be used

for labelling such inhumane crimes. Violence however is the exception, not the rule in Christianity, and the same is true for Islam.

For those who might jump at this chance to criticise religion, atheists like Pol Pot, Stalin, Chairman Mao, etcetera, are just as much if not more, guilty for horrible crimes against humanity. In fact, history is replete with examples of political leaders who used their words to incite hatred, start wars, and lead their people to commit genocide. (*Source: Do Words Kill? Is Political Rhetoric Inciting Christians to Violence?, BJ Gallger, 28 November 2016, Huffington Post*)

In other words, people with twisted ideologies are the problem whether you follow Islam, Christianity in the case of Anders Breivik, Judaism in the case of Baruch Goldstein or more recently, IDF's Elor Azaria, Hinduism in the case of RSS, Buddhism in the case of Ashin Wirathu or for that matter, Secularism or Atheism in the case of Craig Stephen Hicks from UNC North Carolina killings. Not religion, not race nor country of origin. To suggest otherwise is to be foolhardy.

35. THAT WAS ALL IN THE PAST. CHRISTIANITY TODAY, UNLIKE ISLAM IS A PEACEFUL RELIGION.

Since antiquity, people who call themselves Christians have been responsible for the deaths of thousands of people based on the concept of "Holy War" . . . In modern history, numerous Christians have committed dreadful acts of violence, many times against the civilian population. Here is a short list of modern "Christian" terrorist groups: Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda; Anti-balaka in Central African Republic; the National Liberation Front of Tripura and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland in India; the Maronite Christian militias in Lebanon; and, of course, IRA and the Orange Volunteers in Northern Ireland . . . Christianity, they argue, is the religion of love and peace. Those terrorists who claim to be Christians have merely perverted the true teachings of the Bible to justify violence for their personal gain. And likewise the white American Christians (mostly men) who commit

terrorism are “lone-wolves,” who have mistakenly adopted an anti-abortion or militant agenda as a Christian ideal. (*Source: The Religious Sources of Christian Terrorism by Babak Rabimi on 27 January 2016, Huffington Post*)

The average Christian or the Church also has nothing to apologise for when Christian fanatics in the former Yugoslavia engaged in genocide against Muslims in Bosnia:

Who this weekend remembered the “terrorist” slaughter of 8,000 innocent men and boys almost exactly 20 years ago? Yes, it happened in Europe. A place called Srebrenica. But they were Muslims. And no one blamed the Orthodox church to which the murderers belonged – any more than we blamed Catholics for the mass killing by Christian Catholic militiamen (allies of Israel) of 1,700 Palestinian civilians in Beirut in 1982. Yet those killers had pictures of the Virgin Mary on their rifle butts as surely as the killer of Sousse was acknowledged by Islamists whose slogan is Koranic . . . (*Source: Tunisia hotel attack: Backdrop to this slaughter is a history of violence against Muslims, Robert Fisk, 28 June 2015, The Independent*)

“When the Ku Klux Klan burns a cross in a black family’s yard, Christians aren’t required to explain how these aren’t really Christian acts . . . Muslims are thrust in the spotlight to angrily condemn, disavow, and explain – again – how these barbaric acts are in no way related to Islam”. **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, six-time NBA Champion and League Most Valuable Player.** (*Source: These Terrorists attacks are not about religion, 9 January 2015, Time*)

Over the years, white Christian Americans have walked into schools and churches and slaughtered children and religious study groups. In fact, according to an excellent piece of research based on an extensive Gallup World Poll, the co-authors rightly point out:

“Christian activists have bombed gay bars, shot or killed abortion staff and bombed their clinics but what you won’t see are Baptists, Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, agnostics or people of whatever spiritual background the terrorist happened to identify himself – being rounded up and quizzed to see if they think murder is really bad and whether they condemn it”. (*Source: Who Speaks for Islam, Co-Authors, John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed*)

As recently as November 2015, a self-avowed evangelical Christian, Robert Lewis Dear killed three and injured nine at the Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Dear on several occasions openly expressed his support for radical Christian views and interpretations of the Bible, and praised people who attacked abortion providers, saying they were doing “God’s work”.

Imagine what the media would do to a Muslim American [as they did by linking Omar Mateen a.k.a Orlando Shootings to Islam] if he praised suicide bombers as “God’s work.” or cited ISIS as “heroes.” But no, the rules for media condemnation are different when a white man with such strong misguided Christian beliefs utters such profanity.

Similarly, an ex-convict, Joseph Schreiber was sentenced to 30 years in prison in April 2017 for setting fire to the Islamic Center of Fort Pierce, United States at a mosque that the Orlando nightclub shooter attended occasionally. The damage to the mosque was so extensive that the mosque had to relocate. Schreiber who is a Jew confessed to committing the crime in September 2016 to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks but to point the finger at Judaism as the misguided actions of a criminal is not only unfair but also ludicrous.

Therefore, what happened in San Bernardino was a criminal act. So was Columbine. So was Sandy Hook. So was Virginia Tech. We need to understand none of the above represents Christianity. Similarly, groups like ISIS that are committed to murder and mayhem don’t represent Islam either. What the terrorists with Muslim names do is no more done in their name, than the shootings of abortion doctors are connected to the Church of England or the Vatican.

Over the Atlantic, it is worth noting that one of the worst acts of terrorism to have occurred in Europe in recent history – the 2011 attack in Norway that left 77 people dead – was committed by a Christian extremist, Anders Breivik. Yet, no one has ever asked the Pope at the Vatican or the Archbishop in whatever denomination of Christianity to condemn this or other terror attacks.

“During the colonial period, the Algerians were denied their identity, their language, and their rights. The French looked at and treated these Arabs as less than human. During all that time and even now, in hindsight, did we ask Christianity to reexamine itself? Did we ever

suggest that this mass murderous rampage that engulfed a continent had its roots in a religion that glorified conquest and blessed oppression and racism?" *James Zogby, President, Arab American Institute (Source: Were the Murders at Charlie Hebdo Really About Islam?, 17 January 2015, Huffington Post)*

Put simply:

The difference between Muslim violence and Christian violence is that when a Christian commits violence of any sort he is going against the teachings and life example of Jesus. But when a Muslim commits violence, he is following the teachings and life example of Mohammed [PBUH]. (*Source: Gabe Kesseru, in a Letter to the Editor to USA Today on 3 July 2016*)

36. SO YOU ARE DENYING THE RISKS AND THREAT OF ISLAMIC TERRORISM?

With over 300 million firearms in the US today, costing over 30,000 lives annually, mass shootings in America take many more lives than terrorism carried out in the name of Islam. Yet, we are puzzlingly far more afraid of Muslims today. In response to the 9/11 attacks, the West changed laws and rechanneled precious government spending towards terrorism, fought at least three wars and ignored gun safety laws, which would have surely made American streets much safer but no, this was not to be.

Among the many perils of American life from car crashes to suicide, E. coli illnesses to floods, injuries from crumbling infrastructure to mass killings by non-Islamic lone wolves, Islamic terrorism remains at the bottom of the barrel in the company of other frightening but rare events like shark attacks. Yet the American national security state has essentially been built and funded to protect you from that danger alone. (*Source: Tomgram: Engelhardt, The National Security State's Incestuous Relationship with the Islamic State by Tom Engelhardt on November 19, 2015*)

In his lengthy interview with the Atlantic, Barack Obama said he often reminds his advisers that terrorism claims fewer American lives

than “falls in bathtubs do”. (*Source: Overreacting to Terrorism? by Nicholas Kristof, 24 March 2016, New York Times*)

Furthermore in a separate report on gun violence in the US in 2015, more people were shot and killed by toddlers than by terrorists (*Source: Toddlers Involved in More Shootings Than Terrorists in 2015 by Benjamin Powers, 29 November 2015, Huffington Post*), illustrating how the threat of terrorism led by someone with a Muslim name is severely overblown.

Nonetheless, news tends to focus on terror attacks, suicide bombings and killing sprees by psychopaths while traffic accidents and people dying from falling over in their bathtubs gets lost in the fog of ill-informed news soundbites, even though these are far bigger dangers to most people. Worse still, technology is used to spread myths, in an unprecedented way to an unsuspecting audience, who then end up conflating this untruth as fact on the news, online and on social media. (*Source: The anti-Prevent lobby are dominating the discourse, not all Muslims oppose Prevent, 7 October 2016, Sara Khan, LSE*)

37. IF WHITE TERRORISM IS REALLY AN ISSUE, WHY ISN'T THE GOVERNMENT DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

In a quick overview of how right-wing threats were overlooked and left to fester and grow in the post 9/11 climate, Richard Cohen from the Southern Poverty Law Center provides an excellent overview:

After the bombing, then Attorney General Janet Reno formed the Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee to coordinate the government's response. Numerous terror plots were foiled and militia leaders arrested. Partly as a result of the crackdown, the militia movement fell into disarray . . . As fate would have it, the terrorism task force was scheduled to hold a monthly meeting on Sept. 11, 2001. It did not meet that day, for obvious reasons. But the task force did not skip just one meeting. As the country's focus shifted to al Qaeda, the group did not meet again for 13 years . . . During the interim, domestic extremism surged. The number of hate groups, mainly white supremacists, nearly

doubled in a 10-year span . . . From 2008 to 2012, the number of so-called “Patriot” groups, including militias, multiplied by more than 800 percent, to 1,360 . . . West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center reported in 2013 that right-wing violence during the period surpassed that of the 1990s by a factor of four. The attacks included the 2012 massacre of six Sikhs at a Wisconsin temple by neo-Nazi Wade Page. (*Source: President Trump: Don’t ignore terror from the radical right, 9 February 2017, Richard Cohen, Southern Poverty Law Center*)

38. WHY WOULD THE GOVERNMENT OR PUBLICLY ELECTED POLITICIANS EVER LIE TO US?

Here a former adviser to former PM John Howard (days when terrorism was not much of a problem in Australia) talks about how politically expendable asylum seekers have been conflated with terrorism, laying the brickwork for social division and what ought to be done to repair the damage:

It would be fair to say Muslims have had an uncomfortable existence in Australia since the influx of asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran began in 1999. A general antipathy towards people from the Middle East was exacerbated by the Tampa incident in August 2001 and then the Al Qaeda attacks in September of the same year. Not long after, then defence minister Peter Reith made the first connection in Australians’ minds between boat-borne asylum seekers and terrorists, saying in a television interview “security and border protection go hand in hand”. By the time of the federal election, the Howard government was shamelessly hinting that asylum seekers could be terrorists trying to slip into Australia through the back door. Since that time, it has been in successive governments’ interests to maintain voters’ perception that asylum seekers, and particularly those of the Muslim faith, are a “threat” to our nation’s security and “our way of life”. A paramilitary edifice has been constructed around Australia’s border “protection” regime to simultaneously heighten our anxiety about apparent hordes of maybe-terrorists lingering off our northern shores, while giving

assurance that Operation Sovereign Borders will protect us from those same barbarians. It's the classic political sleight of hand: create a problem and then provide the solution in order to look like a hero. This tactic has inflicted a high price in terms of Australia's social cohesion. The irresponsible branding of asylum seekers as potential jihadists has so infected our collective psyche that we now feel threatened by the mere presence of Middle Eastern men or Islamic accoutrements like the Burqa. It's hardly surprising then that some young Muslims have felt marginalised and been drawn to the siren call of extremists offering a community in which to belong. Whether Australia is responsible or not for the eventual rise of Islamic State, along with the other prosecutors of the War on Terror, it is responsible at least in part for the radicalisation of its local Muslim population. No matter how warranted this latest military intervention into Iraq is, there is a responsibility incumbent on all concerned to ensure the "campaign for the campaign" does not exacerbate the isolation already being felt by Australian Muslims or antagonise any antipathy towards them. It's one thing for the Government to describe the need for enhanced security measures in terms of the increased threat from which they're designed to protect us; it's quite another to create unnecessary anxiety to pressure the community into acquiescence. The latter course simply provides a platform for bigotry and hate-mongering such as that expressed by the Liberals' Cory Bernardi and Palmer United Party's Jacqui Lambie. It doesn't help either to simply dismiss the Government's talk of heightened threat levels as a mere shadow under the bed, or nothing more than an attempted deflection from its other woes. This does nothing to placate those members of the community who feel real anxiety about the threat of terrorism, or validate the good intentions of the vast majority of Australian Muslims . . . Any discussion of those exploiting the current terror threat debate would not be complete without a mention of the media. In the true spirit of the "if it bleeds, it leads" edict, Australia's media has had a field day reporting the latest campaign in the War on Terror with must-buy front pages and click-worthy headlines. In the rush to secure an exclusive, the print media in particular has presented readers with factually anorexic stories and unedifying headlines such as "Police Kill Abbott Jihadi" and "Jihad Joey". Another newspaper

identified the wrong man altogether on its front page as an alleged terrorist. When it comes to exploitation of the terrorism threat, nobody's hands are clean: not those of politicians, the media, or even our own. Home-grown extremism is a multifaceted and complex issue, fraught with the vagaries of the human condition. It's a diabolical problem that cannot easily be addressed. Yet like most incendiary situations, the first step is clear: we need to take the heat out of it. The main players need to resist the temptation to exploit the terror threat discussion by exaggerating, scoring political points, sensationalising or using stereotypes. This would make a strong first step towards repairing the damage caused by more than a decade of having demonised Australian Muslims. By putting social cohesion first, we could do more for national security than fighting a foreign war ever could. (*Source: How we're exploiting the terrorism threat by Paula Matthews on 29 Sep 2014, Australian Broadcasting Corporation*)

39. WITH RANDOM ACTS OF TERRORISM HAPPENING, ARE ORDINARY CITIZENS OF THE WEST AT FAULT IF THEY ARE SCARED OF ISLAM OR ANYONE SPORTING A BEARD OR A FULL BODY BURQA?

So ignorance is okay even if it leads to prejudice and discrimination let alone acid attacks or killings – and it is the fault of those who are being discriminated against and not the fault of those who discriminate? In fact, to actually believe it is not an average persons' fault to have prejudice sounds like a popular line right from the playbook of the far-right. Put simply, if one does not like someone from a community vilified in the press that is for example, a priest from a church because some churches turn a blind eye to pedophilia or someone from the LBGTQI community, the attack is free for all?

40. BUT THE WEST HAS ALWAYS BEEN TOLERANT TOWARDS MUSLIMS AND WHILE THERE MAYBE SOME FORM OF PREJUDICE TODAY, MOST COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN DO NOT HAVE SUCH PROBLEMS?

To dishonestly claim widespread discrimination and minority disillusionment doesn't exist is completely false. To illustrate this, it may be worth going through some highly reflective, personal observations from Randa Abdel-Fatta, an ordinary Muslim in Australia:

"Do you want to know how it feels to be an Australian Muslim in the Australia of today?" . . . "Then turn on the television, open a newspaper. There will be a feature article analysing, deconstructing, theorising about Islam and Muslims in which your fellow Australians will be offered the chance to make sense of this phenomenon called 'the Muslim' . . . "This is what it means to be an Australian Muslim today. It is to try to live against the perception that one represents a synonym for terrorism and extremism" . . . "It is to see the faith you embrace with such conviction defiled and defamed because acts that defy Islamic law and doctrine are still prefixed by the media with the word "Islamic" . . . It is to have the reasonable, peaceful statements of your leaders ignored and the ignorant ravings of the minority splashed across the headlines. It is to be the topic of talkback radio rant and raves . . . "It is to come to accept that although atrocities are committed in the name of all religions around the world, it is Islam alone that will be judged by the actions of those who purport to be its followers. It is to refuse to lay blame for the behaviour of so-called Christians at the feet of Christ because you respect the intent of Christ's words and actions and because you know that even those acting in his name are misguided . . . "So what it means to be an Australian Muslim today is that you will often sit alone, in the silence of your hurt and fury, and wonder why it is so difficult for Islam, a religion followed by 1.5 billion people, all of whom cannot be uncivilised, unintelligent, immoral, unthinking dupes, to be treated with the same respect." (*Source: Religion and the Racial Discrimination Act: Don't Muslims Also Deserve Protection? By Mariam Veiszadeh on ABC on 25 February 2015*)

4I. HOW BEST TO BRIDGE THE GAP OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS?

Australian Comedian Nazeem Hussain prescribes the best cure possible to overcome this sad state of affairs. She says:

“One of the take home messages for me was that people really need to get out there and start meeting people from outside their own communities. I think the report really shows that when people have had interactions with others that instances of discrimination, I believe are a lot less, and I think that the public conversation around multiculturalism has clearly been positive over the years and it would be great to see that sort of leadership around conversations to do with refugees and asylum seekers as well, because clearly the facts aren’t really being presented appropriately.” (*Source: Racial discrimination on rise in Australia: report on 21 Oct 2013*)

CAN A BOOK CHANGE THE WORLD?

We unfortunately live in a world today that is paralysed with misinformation. No amount of public relations can change this culture of misinformation against Islam and ordinary Muslims, unless Muslims themselves take matters into their own hands. Therefore, it will take more than a book to change the discourse on irrational Islamophobia. Nonetheless for starters, if a single word, sentence, paragraph, page or chapter could directly or indirectly help spark a much needed introspective debate over the wholesale blaming of Muslims or at a micro-level, can nudge the reader into doing something constructive to counter irrational Islamophobia today and thus, contribute towards reengineering the revival of self-confidence of ordinary Muslim youth and teenagers tomorrow, this book will be a thorough success.

In fact, I once came across a relatable Arab principle called “Fard Kefayah” which can broadly be defined as: “If some basic human need isn’t being fulfilled, it is upon every single individual to drop what they are doing to fulfill that obligation”. This very idea forms the entire epigraph of this book. YOU, stepping up to defuse: the negative, politicised and stereotypical discourse, surrounding Muslims today.

Only when we ordinary Muslims are adequately well-versed and well-informed will the constitutionally protected hate mongering bigots and individuals, groups and certain royals who have hijacked Islam be viewed as needlessly offensive and in due course, be permanently left to the fringes of society.

While there are over one hundred sizeable charity foundations among Muslim-owned businesses, multi-millionaires if not billionaires focusing on poverty, women empowerment, religion and education among many other worthwhile causes but one is hard pressed to find a single charity in the Middle East today that: “focuses on addressing the

root cause of why the Muslim youth are as demoralised by their unrepresentative governments”, (*Source: Muslim Millennial attitudes on religion and religious leadership, Tabah Foundation & Zogby Research Services, 2016*) as they are. Not one single charity to help lift Muslim youth from the lack of self-confidence in themselves and their faith.

In essence, there are Muslim billionaires with yachts, art collection, fast cars, mansions and sizeable shareholdings in NYSE and LSE-listed benchmark stocks but not a single individual, group or NGO dedicated to combatting the growing Muslim witch-hunt, otherwise known as irrational Islamophobia and biased mainstream press coverage targeting Islam and as a result, ordinary Muslims.

With the support of ordinary Muslims worldwide, we hope to change this.