

Ten years ago, a UN conference in Durban, South Africa, featured \223racism, xenophobia, and related intolerance.\224 The conference was a hate fest with only two targets: Israel and \223Western Imperialism.\224 It was so ugly that most Western ambassadors walked out, past banners that equated Israelis with Nazis and much worse: posters illustrating the Koranic claim that Jews are descendants of pigs and apes.

Durban II, held in Geneva in 2009, keynoted that famously \223tolerant\224 man, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. It was boycotted by most Western governments. This year, Durban III features just one \223racism:\224 criticism of Islam, or \223Islamophobia.\224

At the UN, just blocks away from the former World Trade Center, they are whining that the world is not nice to Islam and that this is racism. (Is Islam a race?)

\223Islamophobia\224 interests me because I am regularly attacked by a small coterie in Santa Cruz who say I am \223Anti-Islam.\224 Does this mean that these critics are \223Pro-Islam?\224 Which aspects of today\222s actions \223in the name of Islam\224 do they like?

\225 Pakistan, where young women are murdered each year, sometimes buried alive, for saying they want to choose their own husbands?

\225 Pakistan, where a suicide bomber blew himself up in a mosque during midday prayer because he hated the \223wrong sort\224 of Muslims? (Another bomber detonated at the funeral.)

\225 The United Arab Emirates Supreme Court that ruled a man is free to beat his wife and children as long as he doesn\222t leave marks (authority of the Koran)?

\225 Saudi Arabia, where a hospital surgically mutilated a young man\222s spinal cord as penalty for injuring another man in a fight (Shariah law)?

This is just a partial list of very ugly stuff overseas. (See Joel Brinkley, Foreign Matters columnist of the San Francisco Chronicle\222s Insight section, 9/11/2011). Of more concern, the threat to the United States has grown exponentially in ten years. A Department of Justice report (March of 2010) showed that of 228 terror-related arrests, 186 of them were Muslim. That is over 80 percent from a Muslim community that represents less than 2 percent of the U.S.; fortunately, violent Jihadis are just a small, but lethal minority of American Muslims.

Violence can be found everywhere; but only where Islamic Law prevails are such actions justified by religion. It is also important to note that these horrific interpretations of Islam are not some sort of aberration (an excuse often made). Rather they are possible interpretations of material in Islamic texts, from the Koran through Hadith and Sharia.

Al Qaeda and the Salafist clerics in Saudi Arabia (and Pakistan) can cite exactly where their notions come from. At the same time, gentler Muslim sects can cite authority from other, more humane parts of these same texts. The problem is the texts, which are a compendium of enlightenment and savagery, all mixed together. One can cherry-pick.

Secular Muslims living in the United States are free to select which parts of Islam they will follow (or not follow). Having this choice is the first step in what is so badly needed in Islam: a Reformation. The world is a far better place since the reformation of Christianity. Islam needs the same benefit. But it is a bloody process. Religious fanatics are a murderous lot\227and will kill anybody who has another interpretation---or who calls them violent.

Although this is an internal Muslim issue, Muslims live everywhere in the world today and their enlightened host countries must insist on their following Western law, no exceptions. I know plenty of Iranian and Afghan Muslims who are happy to be out from under the control of the clerics and state enforcement in their homelands.

I am pro-Islam when Islam is but one religion in a multiplicity of religions, as in the United States, where one can practice or not practice without threat of religious

persecution. We demonstrate this when we permit a moderate Islamic Center near Ground Zero in New York, even though Muslim-majority states regularly destroy Christian churches and persecute Christians and minority Islamic sects. They are bigots; we are not.

677 words

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