

Every time Islamists select a target, such as the recent attack in Manchester, handwringers come out with the usual nonsense: "These attackers are not acting in the name of Islam," according to mainstream Muslims and well-intentioned journalists. I sympathize with Muslims who quietly practice their faith (or not practice it if they choose), and nice people do not want to tar all Muslims with the same brush. However, Islamists are not outliers, but are ready to die for fundamental demands of their faith.

As I have written before, Islam is not a peaceful religion, nor has it ever been. It is a militant faith. However, there are many ways to practice this faith, depending on where Muslims live. Shiite and Sunni Muslims who might be at each others' throats in Iraq and Yemen are not targeting each other when they live in the liberal west. They get along.

In Muslim-majority countries, however, the militant, intolerant form of Islam is resurging. In Egypt, where the ancient Christian sect (Copts) were once Egypt's majority, they are now fewer than 10 percent and are fleeing. The once laid-back Egyptian Muslims are growing more pious and fanatical, and we can see this in the proliferation of hijab-covered women and the deadly attacks on the Copts. Egypt has changed.

In Indonesia, which once practiced a benign form of Islam and gave hope that their religion could coexist with modern democracy, some virulent Muslim cults have emerged, ready to terrorize the rest. Once more, we see hijab-covered women where once were modern women participating in all activities. The beautiful mountain areas where vacationers once picnicked in the cooler air now house brainwashing schools (madrasahs) financed and led by Saudi Wahhabi clerics.

Around the world, even in the West, Saudi-financed mosques are proliferating and Saudi-trained clerics are serving up fundamentalist, literalist Islam. Had the Saudis not benefited from oil wealth, their puritanical sect would only have poisoned Arabia. Money has allowed them to poison Islam everywhere. Al Qaeda came out of Saudi Arabia, as did the majority of the 9-11 suicide murders, none of them poor or downtrodden, and all of them educated (such as it is) in Saudi Arabia.

This supposedly modern country still holds public floggings and decapitations every Friday. ISIS has picked up these practices, along with reopening slave markets, permitted in literal interpretations of holy texts. A new wrinkle is special prayers before and after raping captives (ask the Yazidis about this).

So what can we know about how suicide and car bombers target? They pursue soft targets (as cowards will), but what kind of soft targets? In the Muslim world, they attack marketplaces where women and children shop. Wahhabi Islam does not permit women out of the house without a male guardian, therefore such targets are permitted.

In Bali, Berlin, Paris, and Orlando, they targeted nightclubs where young people dance, drink, and socialize, all forbidden in Wahhabi Islam. In Manchester they targeted predominantly girls and a girl entertainer. Girls must not be free to enjoy themselves, according to the Wahhabis. And music is forbidden in the most pious Islam, as is consumption of alcohol. Attempted murder of a schoolgirl in Pakistan was a message about forbidding education for girls. It is no surprise that in the Netherlands, where only 6 percent of the population is Muslim, 60 percent of women in domestic violence shelters are Muslim. This is a real clash of civilizations.

In once secular-ruled Turkey, fundamentalist Islam is making a big comeback. Again, headscarves proliferate; women's centers for battered women are being closed; religious instruction is back in the public schools. These are giant steps backwards. The Economist was wrong to call Turkey's AK Party "mildly Islamist." This is like being mildly pregnant.

Other attacks target police recruits, military barracks, and secular celebrations such as Bastille Day. Churches, shrines, and Mosques of a conflicting sect (Sufis) are targets. Everything Islamist terrorists do can be found in Islam's history. This war is not only against the Enlightenment West, but against non-ideological Muslims living around the world. This is what fundamentalism looks like.

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.