NO to Political Islam, YES to Human Rights.

Why Sharia Law must be Opposed

Sharia law is the instrument by which Political Islam seeks to control the Muslim world. Whilst the Sharia may have been inspired by the Holy Quran, it has developed and evolved through time and through the efforts of men. The Sharia should be open to analysis, research and criticism like any other system of law, practice and belief. Its divine inspiration should no more shield it from criticism than Christianity should have been spared criticism for burning heretics or massacring unbelievers. The more pernicious interpretations of the Sharia today fall far short of the minimum standards of justice widely demanded by the international community and by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The Sharia should be opposed for its imposition of theocracy over democracy, its abuse of human rights, its institutionalized discrimination, its denial of human dignity and individual autonomy, its punishment of alternative lifestyle choices, and for the severity of its punishments.

In the west, in countries that have a sizable Muslim population, there have been calls for the Sharia to be adopted for the Muslim community. These calls should be vigorously opposed; the Sharia conflicts with many basic human values, such as equality before the law, that punishments should be commensurate with the crime, and that the law must be based on the will of the people. The Sharia as it developed in the first few centuries of Islam incorporated many pre-Islamic Middle-Eastern misogynist and tribal customs and traditions. The Sharia was developed not only from the Holy Quran but incorporates legal principles from other sects. We may ask how a law whose elements were first laid down over 1,000 years ago can possibly be relevant in the 21st century. The Sharia reflects the social and economic conditions at the time of the Abbasids and has become further and further out of touch with later social, economic, technological, cultural and moral developments. The principles of the Sharia are inimical to moral progress, humanity and civilized values.

The problem for all of us is how to oppose the violations of human rights inherent in the Sharia without being accused of blasphemy or apostasy. We would suggest that the answer lies in a return to the Five Pillars of Islam.

For non-Muslims who want to help, the problem is how to avoid charges of cultural imperialism, neocolonialism and racism, or of failing to respect "the other". But cultural relativism is not the answer. In India, each religion has its own social laws. Muslim women do not enjoy the same rights as Hindu women. Why not? Justice cries out for secularism. One law for all – equality before the law – for Muslims and non-Muslims, for men and women alike, must be the answer.

Many of the arguments for permitting each religion or culture to determine its own laws are based on a misunderstanding of the nature of human rights. Human

rights as defined in the UDHR are vested in the individual, not the group. As soon as rights are accorded to a group rather than to individuals, conflict becomes possible not only between one group and another, but between the group and its own members. Any group that denies the right of its members to leave is in contravention of one of the most fundamental principles of human rights. Yet clearly, one of the reasons for the growth of Islam over the past century has been that becoming a Muslim is a one-way street. Whether by birth or conversion (historically likely to have been a forced conversion) once you are a Muslim the only way out, under the Sharia, is death.

When Political Islam really does advocate jihad to achieve world domination, then anyone deeply concerned with humanity and human rights will be critical. Of all the existing ideologies, Political Islam remains the greatest danger to humanity. Political Islam has been neither tamed nor moderated by progressive forces. It has the power to inspire the terrorist mind, and, through its ties to oil-rich states, the funds to pursue its plans.

Islamic apologists often claim that many so-called violations of human rights are based on a misreading of the Holy Quran and will quote this or that sura in its defense. But the arguments against Political Islam are not against the holy texts but against the Sharia as it is practiced today in Islamic states. We are told that Islam is a religion of peace and that the struggle, jihad, to impose Islam by conquest is not to be taken literally. But for Political Islam it is. Ask the suicide bombers. The only possible response to the charge of misunderstanding or misreading Islam is to look at the reality of what is happening in those countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and northern Nigeria where the Sharia now holds sway.

The world is a battleground of social movements and ideas. It took people in the west over 400 years of often-bloody struggle to gain the right to criticize Christianity. Even now, that right is still not fully recognized. In Britain, for example, there is still a law against blasphemy, and many Islamic clerics have argued that it should be extended to cover Islam as well. It should be scrapped. Once we are prevented from expressing our point of view in the market place of ideas we will be heading back to the Dark Ages.

We must recognize that we now live in a global community. Society is far larger, more diverse and far more complex than the primitive tribal society of 7th century Arabia that gave birth to Islam. It is time to renounce the idea that anyone should be ruled exclusively by the Sharia. More than ever before, people need a secular state that respects freedom of religion, and freedom from religion for those that have none, and human rights founded on the principle that power belongs to the people. This means that we must reject the claims of the Islamists that sovereignty belongs exclusively to Allah – by which they mean His representatives, that is, themselves. Indeed it demands that the very concept of an Islamic state be challenged. The imposition of Sharia law for political ends must be opposed.

What is needed is nothing less than the secularization of Islamic society, and the establishment of the idea that individual conscience must be our guide and the judge of personal, private conduct. But secularization cannot be imposed from

outside by force. Attempts by America and its allies to impose democracy and human rights on the Islamic world will rightly be resisted as neocolonialism and will simply drive more and more Muslims into the arms of the extremists. The onus is on us to promote the ideals of personal freedom, progress and change from within Muslim society, with help from those in the rest of the world who share our ideals and hopes for the future.

We call on all Muslims and all who value freedom, democracy and human rights to support our campaign:

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Ref.: http://www.ntpi.org/html/whyoppose.html but 2011-10-22 the link and also http://www.ntpi.org and http:/ntpi.org are dead