

Islamia

الإسلامية

EVERY FRIDAY

On Targeting Muslims in Europe and Minority Rights in Islam

More harrowing stories continue to inundate us through the news about Muslims struggling to maintain a semblance of identity and tradition in various European countries. The headlines are no longer speaking of banning minarets, bearded policemen or accusing women wearing Hijab of violating some company's uniform policy. The 'Muslim question' is now high on many countries agendas. Many Muslims are targeted, derided and even denied citizenships because of issues pertaining to their Muslim identities and religious practices.

Islam is a tolerant religion. True, Islam and Muslims received much censure in recent years – motivated largely by politics and war propaganda. But the fact remains that Muslim countries have always been some of the safest and most conducive polities where religious minorities' rights were respected and honored. After all, historically repeated Jewish migration to the Muslim world took place throughout the years as entire Jewish communities were persecuted in Europe. Crossing the border into a Muslim country meant immediate protection under Islamic law that guaranteed the security, safety and the sanctity of human life, any human life.

Islam neither forces believers of other faiths to convert, nor persecute them for holding onto their faiths. The Holy Quran says: "If it had been thy Lord's Will, they

would all have believed, all who are on earth; wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe?" (QS Yunus/10: 99)

Allah also reveals in the Quran: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands out clear from error." (QS Al-Baqarah/2: 256)

Prominent Muslim scholar Dr. Jamal Badawi recently wrote: "Minority rights under Muslim rule is summed up in the rule: 'for them (minorities) are rights like ours and on them are responsibilities like ours' .. Furthermore, Al-Quran clearly protects the freedom of belief (QS Al-Baqarah/2: 256). It also protects the right of worship and respects all places of worship (QS Al-Haj/22: 40).

Another scholar, Sheikh Muhammad Nur Abdullah, elaborates: "Islam believes in freedom of choice. Faith itself is a choice in Islam. All have the freedom to practice their own faith without harassment or any kind of threat. The history of Islam proves this very well when Muslims, Christians, and

Jews lived together in dominant Islamic societies. We can contrast this to the Muslims who lived in Christian Spain when they were persecuted and prejudiced against on account of their faith."

"As for minority rights, the Shari'ah protects the rights of non-Muslims living in an Islamic society. The Islamic state has to guarantee protection for their life, property, and the places of worship. The hadith states: 'Whoever harms a non-Muslim (Dhimmi) will not enter Paradise.' (Reported by Muslim)"

No wonder why Muslims everywhere are shocked and outraged by the mistreatment of Muslim communities in Europe. But there are other reasons behind the outrage, one is that millions of Europeans work and live in Muslim societies, enjoying rights and freedoms that often surpasses that of the local population. More, while Muslims are merely trying to preserve their cultures and traditions in Western societies in peaceful ways, other

Western countries have armies stationed in Muslim countries, abusing and oppressing Muslim populations in broad day light. While some Western governments are okay with that (and are in fact part of these violent invasions), they are fuming due to the fact that some Muslim women wish to cover their faces or that Mosque minarets are too tall for their architectural sensibilities.

Muslims should always be proud of their Islamic traditions that protect minorities – whether racial or religious – and guarantee their rights. Equally important, they should always practice Islam's teachings in this regard. As for those who are tirelessly targeting Muslims, it behooves them to turn their belligerent, often racist media channels off, and to learn more about Islam from Islamic sources, about its respect of minority and human rights in general. They are sure to learn something.

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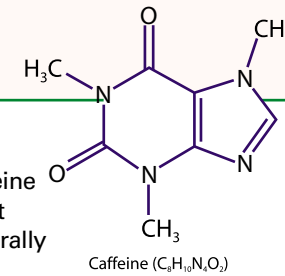
A Spanish imam leading a congregational prayer at a makeshift mosque in the town of Vilanova i la Geltru, near Barcelona, Spain.

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