

Another Failed Attempt to Defend Sharia Law and Islam

On Saturday, June 10, there were marches against Sharia, which is Islamic law, in at least 20 cities in America. But according to the Bridge Initiative Team, these marches were both misinformed and misguided. "In reality," we are told, "these protests are motivated by Islamophobia. They are organized by an anti-Muslim group and are an attempt to further entrench and legitimize myths about Sharia, Islamic law and thus, Muslims everywhere."

The marches were organized by ACT for America's Brigitte Gabriel. Previously, she claimed that "a practicing Muslim, who believes in the teachings of the Koran, cannot be a loyal citizen to the United States of America."

The Bridge Initiative Team categorically rejects this point of view, also rejecting ACT's top 10 list of reasons as to why Sharia Law is incompatible with American Law.

According to the Bridge team, the reasons "include cherry-picked and poorly translated verses from the Quran and traditional literature, and they cite only one book. Completely ignoring over 1,000 years of legal scholarship and richly diverse interpretations of Sharia, an anti-Muslim grassroots organization focused on national security has attempted to re-define what this aspect of Islamic law is."

Is the Bridge team correct? Let's look at their claims one at a time.

1. The Quranic verses are cherry-picked. This is incorrect. The verses are cited fairly and are representative of many more similar verses. In fact, violent verses outweigh tolerant verses in the Quran.

2. The verses are poorly translated. This is incorrect. The verses are not translated at all. They are summarized or paraphrased. But they are summarized and paraphrased fairly and accurately.

3. Only one book is cited. This is misleading. The list is intended to be popular, not scholarly, so one should not expect detailed annotation. That being said, hundreds of books could be cited to back every point on the list, including books on the life of Muhammad, books on Islamic history and books on Islamic jurisprudence.

4. The list ignores more than 1,000 years of Islamic scholarship and interpretation. This is misleading. Everything the list states is supported by more than 1,400 years of Islamic history and theology. While there are other interpretations of the relevant sources within Islam, they cannot invalidate the many sources that do support violent Islam.

To look at one item on the list in more depth. Reason #2 states, "When a person leaves Islam, take them and slay them where you find them" (Quran 4:89). Is this mistranslated or taken out of context?

The full verse reads, "They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved so you would be alike. So do not take from among them allies until they emigrate for the cause of Allah. But if they turn away, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take not from among them any ally or helper." This is the rendition from the website, which is obviously quite pro-Islamic.

This directive is confirmed in the earliest traditions of the teachings of Muhammad. See, for example, Sahih Bukhari (52:260), "The Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him.'" This is one of many examples that could be cited.

A pro-Islamic website, , which answers questions about Islam, explains this further:

If a Muslim apostatizes and meets the conditions of apostasy—i.e., he is of sound mind, an adult and does that of his own free will—then his blood may be shed with impunity. He is to be executed by the Muslim ruler or by his deputy—such as the qaadi or judge, and he is not to be washed (after death, in preparation for burial), the funeral prayer is not to be offered for him, and he is not to be buried with the Muslims.

A Wikipedia article correctly notes that, “Until the late 19th century, the vast majority of Islamic scholars in Madh’hab (Sunni) and Imamah (Shia) schools of jurisprudence held that for adult men, apostasy from Islam was a crime as well as a sin, an act of treason punishable with the death penalty.”

Today, Islamic countries like Iran and Sudan have the death penalty for apostasy, in harmony with the teachings of Muhammad and the Quran. So much for the ACT list misrepresenting Islam and Sharia.

More broadly, Islamic legal scholar Joseph Schacht gives us a chilling overview of what Sharia law dictates for non-Muslims: “The basis of the Islamic attitude towards unbelievers (i.e. non-Muslims) is the law of war; they must be either converted or subjugated or killed (excepting women, children and slaves); the third alternative, in general, occurs only if the first two are refused. As an exception, the Arab pagans are given the choice only between conversion to Islam or death.” (Cited from his book *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, published by Oxford’s Clarendon Press.)

Who, then, is being faithful to the most authoritative Islamic sources? Who is representing them accurately? Judge for yourself. {eo}