

Turkish TV Commentator Displays No Fear in Support for Israel

Ceylan Ozbudak is a Muslim Turkish TV commentator, peace activist and supporter of the state of Israel. Despite prevailing anti-Semitism in her own country and the Middle East, she has shown no fear in her public remarks about Israel.

"I know that Israel has this democratic perspective, which is very hard to find in the Middle East," Ozbudak says. "There are minorities in the Knesset, which is hard to find in the Middle East. The democracy of Israel is something that we should all take an example from, as well as the religiousness. I am a religious person and respect religion."

Ozbudak says the Israeli way of life has set an example for everyone in the region, including Muslims.

"Turkey has more mosques per capita than any other country in the world—even Saudi Arabia—and average Turks usually pray," she says. "Mosques are always full in Turkey. Thus, when the Jewish people value and respect their religion, it helps advance the cause of peace, for it helps Israel to fit into this very religious region of the world."

Ozbudak believes Muslims around the world should recognize Israel's right to exist.

"According to Islam, Jews have the right to live in Israel until the day of resurrection, the end of the world," she says. "The Quran says, 'Dwell in this land, and when the promise of the End of Day comes to be fulfilled, we shall ensemble you there.'"

Ozbudak believes Hamas opposition to Israel's right to exist is merely one of many ways in which it is behaving uncharacteristically of Islam. Other manifestations include harming innocent people in violation of Islamic laws with armed conflict and engaging in offensive rather than defensive wars.

"There is also no offensive war in Islam, only a defensive war," she says. "You cannot fire rockets at a place that is not fighting with you."

Ozbudak condemns "radical Islam," saying it has "nothing to do with Islam."

"They hate women, animals, art, science, everything beautiful," she says. "It is a great danger to Islam."

Ozbudak declares that oppressing the opposition and supporting the killing of anyone who thinks differently is not a Muslim idea.

"Our Prophet had agreements with Jews and Christians, and they got along with them. The first Islamic country had Jews, Christians and Muslims living in peace. Caliph Umar invited the Jews back to Jerusalem. We learn Islam from these people. Al-Qaida and the Taliban have nothing to do with this," she says.

As an advocate for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Jews, Ozbudak believes the main obstacle to peace in the Middle East remains ideology. Thus, the ideology of hatred that permeates the Arab world needs to cease, she says.

Ozbudak believes the best way to diminish this hatred is to promote people-to-people interactions among the various peoples of the Middle East so that those living in the region can learn to coexist with each other. In other words, peace should be built from the bottom upwards.

Not surprisingly, Ozbudak and her group have been targeted by radical Islamists for their beliefs. High on al-Qaida's target list in Istanbul is Muslim scholar Adnan Oktar, with whom Ozbudak is affiliated.

Ozbudak believes Oktar is being targeted because he has been very outspoken in favor of peaceful coexistence with Israel. In fact, he and his friends have even held four conferences within Israel on the subject, and have also hosted members of the Israeli press and political leadership.

Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and Israeli Deputy Minister Ayoob Kara, among others, have appeared on Oktar's TV show.

"Someone should speak up and say the truth, so others can follow," Ozbudak says.

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