Chapter 17

CRITICIZING ISLAM MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

The window of free speech in America is closing—at least regarding Islam.

The whitewashing of Islam and jihad goes farther than tendentious propaganda. Honest investigations of the causes of Islamic terrorism are increasingly termed “hate speech” by the PC establishment. CAIR has filed numerous lawsuits against those who say things about Islam that it doesn’t like—making for a chilling effect on those who speak the truth about the religion. “There’s no doubt that CAIR understands this,” notes National Review’s John Derbyshire. “They have Saudi oil money behind them and finance is no issue at all to them. They essentially have infinite funds. They will shut up everyone. On the topic of Islam, free speech is dead.”

Meanwhile, Islamic jihadists have their own methods of silencing critics, as the murder of Theo van Gogh last year on the streets of Amsterdam illustrates.

The chilling of free speech in America:
FOX’s 24 and CAIR

24 is a FOX TV drama about terrorism. Episodes have featured Bosnian terrorists, German terrorists, South American terrorists, and terrorists...
from a Halliburton-like conglomerate. And, most famously, 24 featured Muslim terrorists—or at least terrorists with a vaguely Middle Eastern aspect. But while no Bosnians, Germans, South Americans, or Halliburton execs contacted the network to complain about the way they were portrayed on the show, when FOX ventured into Islamic terror territory, the network immediately aroused CAIR’s ire.

Sabiha Khan of CAIR’s Anaheim chapter worried that 24’s Muslim terrorists would “contribute to an atmosphere that it’s okay to harm and discriminate against Muslims. This could actually hurt real-life people.” CAIR scheduled a meeting with FOX executives in Los Angeles to air its concerns.

Meanwhile, IslamOnline, a popular Muslim news portal run from Qatar, had its own ideas of who was behind 24’s introduction of Muslim terrorists: FOX Entertainment Group, it said, was “part of Jewish billionaire Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation.” It asserted that 24’s new plot direction was “hailed by Jewish groups and lobbyists as a bid to reveal Muslims’ ‘true nature,’” and noted that “Jewish writer Daniel Pipes wrote in the Israeli Jerusalem Post and the American New York Post hoping FOX would not bow to Muslim objections on the series.”

IslamOnline dropped “Jewish” from in front of “billionaire Rupert Murdoch” when informed that Murdoch is not, in fact, Jewish, but the implication of the article is still clear: 24’s introduction of Muslim terrorist characters was yet another in a long line of Jewish conspiracies. It is frequently a bit of knee-jerk paranoia on the part of the defenders of Islamic jihad that anyone who opposes them must be Jewish. This paranoia about the Jews is nourished by the Qur’an’s portrayal of them as crafty, untrustworthy, and accursed. And, of course, jihadists today would have us believe that the trouble between Muslims and non-Muslims is all because of Israel.

But the shadowy “Jewish groups and lobbyists” evidently dropped FOX’s puppet strings, because even before network execs met with CAIR,
the producers of 24 removed some material from the show that they were afraid might stereotype Muslims. FOX also agreed to distribute CAIR’s public service announcement about American Muslims to their affiliates, although the affiliates were not bound to run it.

Dealing with the devil
But why was FOX playing ball with CAIR in the first place? Were the execs who met with CAIR representatives aware that three of its officials have been arrested for various terrorist-related activities? Yes, said a FOX source, that is a matter of public record. Are they aware that CAIR founder Nihad Awad helped establish the organization after working at the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), where he was public relations director—and that former FBI counterterrorism official Oliver Revell has called the IAP “a front organization for Hamas that engages in propaganda for Islamic militants”? Did they know that Awad himself has declared, “I am in support of the Hamas movement”? Well, yes, said the source, they were aware of allegations that CAIR had some links, however tenuous, with Hamas, but they judged the organization’s complaints on their merits. That’s what FOX always does, he said; it considers not the source of a complaint, but the worthiness of the complaint itself.

So if the Ku Klux Klan called FOX with a complaint, that complaint would be judged on its merits, not on its source?

Death knell for the West?
In December 2004, two Christian pastors in Australia were found guilty of religious vilification of Muslims. Although the decision was based on religious hatred laws that are currently on the books in only one Australian state, the greater consideration that such laws are receiving by
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legislatures all over the Western world makes this a threat to us all. For example, Tony Blair's government introduced a bill banning “Incitement to Religious Hatred,” shamelessly pandering to the growing Muslim voter bloc in Britain. It proved too controversial and was dropped in April 2005, but it is still very much a live issue and could become law in Britain in the near future. The Australian case shows the end result of such laws.

One of the pastors, Daniel Scot, is Pakistani. He fled his native land seventeen years ago when he ran afoul of the notorious Section 295(c) of the penal code, which mandates death or life in prison for anyone who blasphemes “the sacred name of the holy Prophet Muhammad.” It's a treacherously elastic statute that is often used to snare Christians who find themselves charged with blasphemy if they are cornered and made to state they don’t believe Muhammad was a prophet.

Scot went to Australia, where he encountered the Australian state of Victoria’s new religious vilification laws. Judge Michael Higgins of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal found him guilty of vilifying Islam in a seminar hosted by his group, Catch the Fire Ministries. The judge noted that during the seminar, Scot stated “the Quran promotes violence, killing and looting.” In light of Qur’anic passages such as 9:5, 2:191, 9:29, 47:4, 5:33 and many others, this cannot seriously be a matter of dispute. As we know, Muslims have pointed to verses in the Bible that they claim are equivalent in violence and offensiveness, or have claimed that the great majority of Muslims don’t take such verses literally. However, it takes a peculiarly strong resistance to the truth to deny that such verses exist, and to charge anyone who points them out with religious vilification.

Yet Higgins wasn’t finished. He also scored Scot for contending that the Qur’an “treats women badly; they are to be treated like a field to plough, ‘use her as you wish,’” and that in it, “domestic violence in gen-
eral is encouraged.” He charged Scot with saying that the Qur’an directs that “a thief’s hand is cut off for stealing.” Yet the idea of the field and “use her as you wish” are from Sura 2:223 of the Qur’an. Husbands are told to beat their disobedient wives in 4:34. Amputation for theft is prescribed in 5:38. What Qur’an is Higgins reading?

Higgins not only got the Qur’an wrong, but was also mistaken about Scot’s own statements. The judge charged that Scot called Muslims “demons,” but according to human rights activist Mark Durie, who was deeply involved in the case, “Scot said at one point in the seminar that in the Qur’an there were jinn (spirit beings) which became Muslims in response to the message of Islam. However, in his summary the judge appears to interpret this as Scot saying that Muslims are demons. So ‘Some demons are Muslims’ becomes ‘Muslims are demons’!”

A predetermined outcome

There are some hints that the outcome of the case was predetermined. When, during the trial, Scot began to read Qur’anic verses that discriminate against women, a lawyer for the Islamic Council of Victoria, the organization that brought the suit, stopped him: Reading the verses aloud, she said, would in itself be religious vilification. Dismayed, Scot replied, “How can it be vilifying to Muslims in the room when I am just reading from the Qur’an?”

With religious vilification laws now coming to Britain and undoubtedly elsewhere in the West, Scot’s question rings out with global implications and must be answered. If it is inciting hatred against Muslims when non-Muslims simply explore what Islam and the Qur’an actually teach, then there cannot be a reasonable public discussion of Islam. Such legal protections actually make Muslims a separate class, beyond criticism, precisely at the moment when the West needs to examine the implications of
having admitted people with greater allegiance to Islamic law than to pluralism, freedom, and democracy.

**To criticize is not to incite**

The courageous ex-Muslim Ibn Warraq calls on Muslims to “admit the role of the Qur’an in the propagation of violence.” If they do not, how can there be an end to jihad terrorism? What will keep jihadists from continuing to use the Qur’an to recruit more terrorists, right under the noses of fatuous Westerners like Judge Higgins, who would prefer to pretend otherwise?

When Judge Higgins signed the guilty verdict on Daniel Scot, he may have been signing the death warrant not just for Victoria state, but for a free Australia, and—if his example is followed elsewhere—the entire Western world.

**The murder of Theo van Gogh**

An event in Holland a month before Higgins’s verdict was even more ominous: On November 2, 2004, Theo van Gogh was shot dead by a Muslim on an Amsterdam street because of a film he had made. His assailant was a Dutch Moroccan who was wearing traditional Islamic clothing. After shooting van Gogh several times, he stabbed him repeatedly, slit his throat with a butcher knife, and left a note on the body containing verses from the Qur’an and threats to several public figures who had opposed the flood of Muslim immigrants into the Netherlands. Yet Dutch prime minister Jan Peter Balkenende said, “Nothing is known about the motive” of the killer.¹⁰

Others were not quite so cautious. A Dutch student said, “This has to end, once and for all. You cannot just kill people on the street in a brutal way when you disagree with them.” Job Cohen, the mayor of Amsterdam,
declared, “We will show loud and clear that freedom of speech is important to us.”

Eight weeks earlier, van Gogh’s film Submission had aired on Dutch TV. The brainchild of an ex-Muslim member of the Dutch parliament, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Submission decried the mistreatment of Muslim women, featuring images of battered women wearing transparent robes that exposed their breasts, with verses from the Qur'an written on their bodies.

Insulting? In poor taste? That was probably the intention. Van Gogh, the great-grandson of Vincent van Gogh’s brother ("dear Theo"), was a well-known and controversial gadfly on the Dutch scene; in the past, he had attacked Jews and Christians with enough vehemence to elicit formal complaints. But after Submission, the death threats started to come. Van Gogh, in the eyes of many Dutch Muslims, had blasphemed Islam—an offense that brought the death penalty. The filmmaker was unconcerned. The film itself, he said, was "the best protection I could have. It's not something I worry about."12

Van Gogh was not the first

Van Gogh’s death shows that everyone who values freedom should worry because murder committed by a Muslim enraged at “blasphemy” is not new. Nor is it a relic of the distant past. In 1947, Islamic radicals murdered Iranian lawyer Ahmad Kasravi in court; Kasravi was there to defend himself against charges that he had attacked Islam. Four years later, members of the same radical Muslim group, Fadayan-e Islam, assassinated Iranian prime minister Haji-Ali Razmara after a group of Muslim clerics issued a fatwa calling for his death. In 1992, Egyptian writer Faraj Foda was murdered by Muslims enraged at his “apostasy” from Islam—another offense for which traditional Islamic law prescribes the death penalty. Foda’s countryman, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Naguib Mahfouz, was stabbed in 1994 after accusations of blasphemy.
Under Pakistan's blasphemy laws, many non-Muslims have been arrested, tortured, and sentenced to die on the slimmest of evidence. And of course, there is Ayatollah Khomeini's notorious death fatwa against author Salman Rushdie.

But for such things to happen in Iran and Egypt, two countries where Islamic radicalism is widespread, is one thing; to have a “blasphemer” brutally murdered on the streets of Amsterdam in broad daylight is another. For thirty years, Europe has encouraged massive immigration from Muslim nations; Muslims now account for 5 percent of Holland's population, and that number is growing rapidly. But it is still largely taboo in Europe—as in America—to raise any questions about how ready that population is to accept Western pluralism. When Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn tried to raise some of those questions in 2002, he was vilified by the PC establishment as a right-wing racist—in line with the continuing tendency of the Western media to frame questions regarding Islam in racial terms, despite the fact that the intransigence of radical Islam is found among all races. And Fortuyn himself, of course, was ultimately murdered by a Dutch assailant who “did it for Dutch Muslims.”

The costs of maintaining the PC myths

The deaths of Fortuyn and van Gogh indicate that the cost of maintaining the taboo against criticizing Islam is growing ever higher. One of the prerequisites of peaceful coexistence of beliefs in a secular society is freedom of speech—particularly the freedom to question, to dissent, even to ridicule. Multiculturalism is heading toward contradiction: If one group is able to demand that its tenets remain above criticism, it is no longer equal, but has embarked on the path of hegemony. Must all other groups tolerate that group in the name of political correctness?

It is long past due for such considerations to become part of the public debate in Western countries. To what extent are Muslim immigrants
in Western countries willing to set aside Islamic strictures on questioning, criticizing, and leaving Islam?

After van Gogh was killed, thousands of people took to the streets of Amsterdam to pay him homage. Among them was a Muslim woman who stated, “I didn’t really agree with van Gogh but he was a person who used his freedom of expression.” She held up a sign reading “Muslims Against Violence,” explaining, “I decided that as a Muslim and a Moroc- can I should take up my responsibility to show that we do not support this act.”°

But the traditional Muslim view is, unfortunately, alive and well; it was firmly restated several years ago by Pakistan’s Federal Sharia Court: “The penalty for contempt of the Holy Prophet . . . is death and nothing else.”° No one knows how many Muslims in Europe and America hold the views of the Moroccan woman at the rally, and how many would side with Pakistan’s Sharia Court—and the killer of Theo van Gogh.

If Western countries continue, out of ignorance, fear, or narrow self-interest, to refuse to find out, there will be many more incidents like the bloody scene in Amsterdam in November 2004.

Living in fear of being a Christian—in Falls Church, Virginia

That couldn’t happen in America, right? Wrong. At a conference held in September 2004, security was tight because of death threats from people holding the same ideology as the killer of Theo van Gogh. The conference was held not in Qom or Karachi, but just outside Washington, D.C., in Falls Church, Virginia.
That’s right: In America in 2004, converts from Islam to Christianity spoke publicly only under assumed names, for fear of becoming the newest victims of the global jihad. The conference was called the “Muslim Background Believers Convention,” a Christian gathering sponsored by several groups, including the Baptist General Association of Virginia. The Washington Times noted that “the convention kept the registration and entrance process under tight security to protect the participants, many of whom say they face death threats or ostracism from their families for leaving the Islamic faith.”

If you leave Islam, you must die

Why did they have to take this extraordinary precaution? Because, as we have seen, in traditional Islamic law, when a Muslim converts to another faith, it can bring a death sentence. This is not, mind you, “extremist” Islam. It is the Islamic mainstream, based on a statement of Muhammad: “Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him.” It’s also based on a statement of the Qur’an: “But whoever of you recants and dies an unbeliever, his works shall come to nothing in this world and the next, and they are the companions of the fire for ever” (Qur’an 2:217). This has been widely interpreted by traditional Muslim commentators as giving sanction to the death penalty for apostates—which they derive from the verse’s assertion that the apostate’s work will “come to nothing in this world” as well as the next.

When converts are not killed, they are otherwise pressured. The organizer of the conference has felt this firsthand: “I was called by my embassy
and told I’d better repent or I could not go back home with my family.” Another convert reported that she had not yet told her family that she had become a Christian. “I know they’re going to disown me,” she said, “if they don’t kill me.” In a free America, you say?

What happens when the law looks the other way
These people have to live in fear because of the long-entrenched and continuing unwillingness on the part of American authorities to face up to the realities of Islam. Law enforcement officials either haven’t known or haven’t cared that Islam mandates the death penalty for those who leave the religion. If they knew that this provision even existed, they probably assumed that Muslims who settled in the United States would discard it and accept the values of American society.

Many have, but an unknown number haven’t, and it is time this fact is acknowledged. This is especially tough for Westerners, however, since the concept of apostasy is so foreign to today’s secular society. Although the Falls Church converts are Christians, this is not solely a Christian issue. Freedom of conscience should be a concern of everyone who professes an interest in human rights. The human rights organizations should be the first to defend these people. American government and law enforcement officials should rush to their aid in the name of freedom.

But because of the PC stranglehold on discussion of Islam, and because shady groups like CAIR have managed to claim victim status for American Muslims, neither the rights groups nor the government have yet noticed that the converts even exist.
"May Allah rip out his spine from his back and split his brains in two, and then put them both back, and then do it over and over again. Amen."

—“praise” for the author on RevivingIslam.com

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Robert Spencer is the director of Jihad Watch and an Adjunct Fellow with the Free Congress Foundation. He is the author of four books on Islam, including Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World’s Fastest Growing Faith (Encounter) and Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West (Regnery), as well as eight monographs and hundreds of articles. He lives in a Secure, Undisclosed Location.