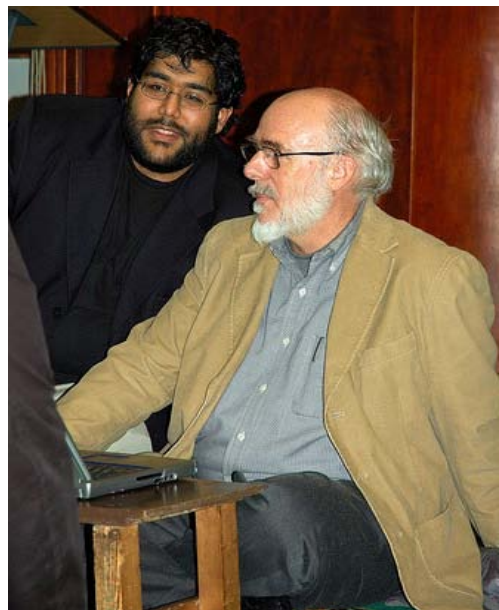


Islamic Extremism in the Context of Globalism

Question and Answer Session

Audience participant:

It's very important for us to come to these very uplifting and invigorating talks, but the fact is that our reality as Muslims is pretty grim in England anyway. I've just come from Ireland and the situation there is very different. The Muslims are very involved and integrated. They have their identity but the fact is, as a newcomer to England, I am shocked by the problems, particularly with regard to how the women are treated. I know it's a controversial issue, but I think it's an extreme situation; women are treated as a non-entity and are barely tolerated. That's a huge generalisation, and there are some wonderful brothers, but generally here, there's always a problem when we walk into a Masjid. It's almost a physical reaction to our presence there. I would like you, as men and women, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, daughters and sons, to give us some advice on how we can bridge that and get over this almost schizophrenia that we're suffering from.



Answer:

I follow a school, and my school is the Mālikī School, and one of my teachers was Dr. Khaldun Al-Ahdab, who is a great muhadith, and one of the greatest of our time, and he's also a great scholar of Islām. He was a very close friend, and a teacher and a colleague, a master of Hadīth. I don't think there's anyone equal to him in that in the Muslim World. I believe very strongly in the Mālikī School, and I respect the other schools. Islām is a religion of descent, a religion of many opinions. One of the things he used to tell me was that if you go back to the Hadīth, you will find that it's very expansive.

I believe that when it comes to gender issues in particular, we need to go back to the Prophet (saw) and Medina. We may be surprised to find there, that a lot of the positions that we take are not like in the days of the Prophet (saw). A very great book that was written by a Salafī whose name is Abu Shaqqa. Abu Shaqqa studied with Al-Albanī and with a number of other scholars. He's an Egyptian. And in studying Al-Bukhārī he noticed that many of the things he was being told were not like the Hadīth that he was reading. He wrote a book called 'Tahrīr

Al-Mar'a fī 'Asri Al-Nubū'a' – The Liberation of Women in the Age of Prophecy. This is the book that is four volumes, based on several hundred Hadīth of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. He didn't use other Ahādīth because he wanted to use what was completely authentic. If I recite a Hadīth from Al-Bukhārī or Muslim you won't doubt it, whereas if I cited from Tirmidhī or ibn Māja or Abu Dāwūd, you'll say 'maybe it's not saḥīḥ,' which it might not be. He was a great man, Abu Shaqqa, read his book. I ask you, read his book. Because what he shows is that gender relations in the day of the Prophet were very open.

'Don't prohibit the maidservants of God from the Mosques of God,' the Prophet said (saw). The women took part in life, they took part in battle. Al-Shifā' who was one of the most noble women of Qureysh, who belonged to the clan of 'Abd Al-Shams – the Prophet put her in charge of the market place. Which means that women were there in the Market Place, selling things. And whom do we follow? Of course we follow the Prophet; so when there are hundreds of Hadīth like this, can't we follow these Ahādīth? Especially when we live in a society, like the society that we're in?

A lot of the positions that we take are just culture taken from the other world. They may even be positions in your school, but let's look at the Ahādīth. Let's look at the precedence and the situation we're in. It's not just an issue of letting women into the mosques, and not just an issue of letting women be educated completely.

Let's be honest. I know my community – some of the things that happen to women are unspeakable and nobody says anything. No man would stand for that. No man who's a true man would stand for that. Manhood is to stand up for the rights of the weak. To stand up for the rights of women and children. In my own community nobody says anything, nobody does anything – the men deny it. Maybe it doesn't happen in your community – I'm not condemning you. I'm not talking about you. But gender is very important, and justice is very important. We have to get the house right together, we need to be serious about these things, and we need to be open minded. We talked about these huge issues.

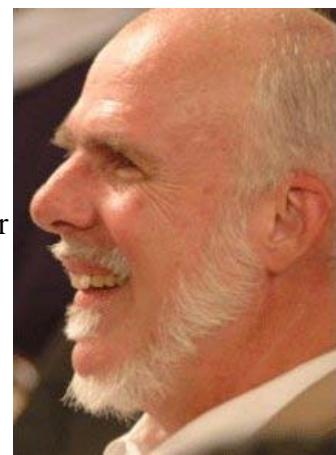
I would love in the United States in any discourse, to be able to talk about Israel. Not to damn it, not to condemn it, but to just look at what happened – to look at the history. What do they teach us in school? Just the facts. Quite frankly I can't do that. Quite frankly it's very difficult to do that. Why? Hegemonic discourse. 'You may not ask why, you may not ask that question; you're an anti-Semite if you do.' No I'm not an anti-Semite, not at all, not in the least – I never would be. I have nothing against the Jews. But let's at least talk about it. You can't do that. But at the same time, you want to talk about these things, talk about these issues, but in our own communities, there's no hegemonic discourse. No wrath and anger. Just talk about it – what does Islām say about it? What is the reality? What is the situation? What is there? What can we do about it?

How can we expect others to allow us to have free discourse on the issues that concern us, if we're not going to allow discourse in our own community? Doesn't sound right to me. Does it sound right to you?

Question:

Audience Participant:

Doesn't Islām require us to spread the truth and make it prevail over



other ways of life? Isn't it ideology?

Answer:

The Qur'an says three times:

'Huwa allathī arsala rasūluhu bil Huda wa dīn Al-Haq udthirahu 'ala Al-Dīn kuleh wa low kariha Al-Kaifirūn wa low kariha Al-Mushrikūn' [9:33]

He, God, is the One who sent his Message with the Guidance and with the religion of truth, so that He make it uppermost, make it prevail over all other religion, even if those who reject the truth – the idolaters- don't like it.

This is the work of God, and we do that, how? In this situation, by being examples. By getting on the front page of the newspaper because of the wonderful things we do. Not because of the atrocious things that so and so did or so and so did.

Islām spread through the Earth by excellent examples. It didn't spread by the sword, you know that. Tell me a single instance where Islām spread by the sword. Never. I can tell you other religions spread by the sword, but not Islām. For Islām to come into Egypt it took almost 300 years. For it to come to the majority of people in Egypt. For Syria almost 350 years. There were Muslim communities, strong and beautiful, but Islām spread by its own light.

Yes we have a message to take – and I believe it's the message of the time. Again, modernity, this age we live in, this economic system that we're part of – it needs guidance, it needs values so that we can have peace, human rights, justice, protect the environment, the women, the children, the orphans, the children who are starving in Africa. The culture in the modern worlds has many wonderful aspects to it but there's so much that is left out.

I mean, my own country wants to militarise space. That's nothing to laugh about; I'm certainly not proud about that. Militarisation of space is one of the greatest threats to humanity that there is. Yet there are people that want to do that. Is that a culture? Is that value? Guidance?

We are here to be lights of guidance. We are here to help humanity in any time, and that is what Muslims have done time and time again, in West Africa and elsewhere. In Indonesia, Malaysia, in China – Muslims have played very dynamic roles. But you do it by being what you're supposed to be and by doing what you have to do, not by shouting at people. And not even by handing out leaflets.

For the United States we have a lot of converts, more than you have here; almost one third to 40% of our community is converts – mostly African Americans – but they're converts. About 4% of your community is converts to my knowledge, and that's great. I'm a convert and know a lot of converts. Do you know a convert who became a Muslim because of a khutbah or a speech or a pamphlet? Do you? I don't. Not a single one. Every convert that I know and that I've read about – how do you think they came? How did I come to Islām? Through a

person. Through a person that you love. Through a friend, a contact. This is the key. That person might be alive, he might be dead. In my case it was Malcolm X whom I love very much and who I will love to the day I die.

I loved Malcolm X and thousands of Americans loved Malcolm X – Whites, Hispanics, Blacks – Malcolm was a wonderful human being, a great human being, a man of truth, a man of honesty and integrity. He could not be corrupted and we loved him. And I followed him into the faith. I would never have come into the faith – I don't believe except through him. Even if you had given me books about it. But it was Malcolm. It was Malcolm. To follow Malcolm. To take the way of Malcolm. And this is really important because if you want to do what you just said, then you've got to take people's hands, got to take friends, got to reach out, open your doors, help people, right?

And you're good at that; you're good people, generous people. If somebody came to your house to eat you would give them the most beautiful feast in the world, wouldn't you. I know you would! Muslims are the best cooks in the world...their wives are! There are exceptions to that. But they are generous people. Muslims are generous.

I've been around the Muslim World and when it comes to generosity, where Muslims were dirt poor and they'd give me everything they had. Even if I don't want it. Believe it or not, but I knew a Moroccan who had nothing but his barnoos – his wool garment. And guests came to his house – and I was one of his guests. He went out and sold his barnoos to buy food and to serve us. He sold the coat off his back. Is that generosity? I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it and am astounded to this day.

And I've seen this many times. People will give you everything they have. I knew a poor man who was a teacher of mine. He didn't have a penny, he didn't even have shoes – he had sandals. And yet he would never take a riyal from me – not even 30 cents from me. Even though I wanted to give him more and more, he would take nothing from me and instead give me something. He'd always give me a sandwich and a Fanta – an orange drink. We are generous people mā shā Allah.

So what I'm saying is, make friends. Help people and if you're interested in spreading the truth, that's how you do it because that's how people come in. But it doesn't happen overnight. Most converts come into Islām anywhere between four and ten years. It takes time. You have to be good. Be honest. Be yourself, be your friend, a helper.

You don't like the news, I don't like the news – but what can you do about the news? There are many things you could do – you could get on the television yourself and get a good spokesperson. You all know Azhar Usman, who's on our board of directors I'm so proud to say. And in his stand up comedy he's got this 'uncle, let me explain you' bit, and you don't want to get 'uncle, let me explain you' on the news. Get other people on the television – another spokesperson. You could do that.

But if you're a friend of these people out here, or our people out there in America, you'll see that the news doesn't affect them the same way. The ones who are really affected are the ones who know us or the ones who know us in a bad way. And again, I could go back to my own city and tell you something really bad, but I'm not going to.

So, you make friends, help people, do ihsān and in shā' Allah we will all succeed. You're on

the winning team – you didn't know that did you. We don't bet in Islām but if I was a better, I'd bet on you.

You're the winning team, time and time again in history, you're knocked down but you get back up. But you always become beautiful – you always make the world beautiful. You build the most beautiful schools, you teach, build the most beautiful cities. This is our legacy. And may we be able to do that.

[Closing du'ā]